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AN OLD-FASHIONED JOURNEY

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From a sketch by J. J Hissey

SNOWDON FROM NEAR CAPEL CURIG

AN

Old-Fashioned Journey

THROUGH

England and Wales

BY

JAMES JOHN HISSEY

England! thou hast within thy wave-girt isle
Scenes of magnificence and beauty rare,
Too often scorn'd by thy ungrateful sons,
Who leave, unseen, thy lovely hills and vales,
And seek for pleasure 'neath a foreign sky

ROGERSON



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1884

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TO

MY WIFE

COMPANION OF MY MANY JOURNEYINGS

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

PREFACE.

We Englishmen hardly appreciate as we should the beauties of our own country. 'Know most of the rooms of thy native land, before thou goest over the threshold thereof, especially seeing England presents thee with so many observables,' is the quaint advice given by that almost forgotten worthy, Thomas Fuller, some two centuries ago, and it is even more applicable to the present day than it was then. The charm of home travel delights us not; we explore the globe from one end to the other, whilst far too often the charming and unique scenery of our own fair land is almost, if not altogether, neglected. I do not allude, of course, to the well-known and much tourist-haunted and guide-book-lauded spots, lovely though they may be, but to the glorious romantic and home like scenery to be found almost everywhere in this isle of ours.

There is only one way of truly seeing the country; rural England, away from railways and

busy towns, can only be really known and properly understood by taking to the highways and byways.

Some years ago a friend persuaded me to join him on a driving tour through the southern counties. It was my first experience of such a delightful mode of travel, and I determined it should not be my last. Before that never-to-be-forgotten journey, I thought I knew England and English scenery well, but that drive was to me a revelation. Since then fortune has been propitious; time and opportunity have permitted me to enjoy my summer holiday by taking driving excursions of some hundreds of miles every year, being away some two or three months each time. This volume is compiled from brief notes taken during one of those pleasant journeys.

It has been a great and unalloyed pleasure to go over again some of my wanderings; and if I can induce any of my readers to divert some of their spare time from foreign to home travel, I shall be more than rewarded for any trouble I may have had, and my book will have done good service.

J. J. H.

South Kensington, 1884.

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AN OLD-FASHIONED JOURNEY.

CHAPTER I.

The Start—Advantages of a Driving Tour—Bedfont—Quaint Yew-trees—A Stony Road—The Horn useful—Virginia Water—Windsor Forest—A Hot Day—Past and Present—Maidenhead—A Runaway Horse.

It was a glorious June day, the horses and phaeton were at the door, the former showing evident signs of impatience to be off, the latter in full travelling trim, with horse clothing, tools, and other necessaries for the road carefully stowed away ; our bags, rugs, mackintoshes neatly packed and secure against storm and dust ; the horn and travelling clock were in their places, and maps, guide-books, &c., all safely stowed away in the boot. So there was no need of delay, and we were quickly in our seats, and the horses' heads turned westwards, and London was slowly left behind. Slowly I have said, for London is a large place—it is a province more than a city—and we had some miles of suburban streets to travel before we could fairly call ourselves in the country.

Hammersmith, Kew Bridge, and Brentford—dirty Brentford—were duly left behind ; Sion House was passed, looking proudly desolate. We spun at a

good pace through the long and intensely uninteresting street of Hounslow, and then the country was at last fairly reached.

There is not to my mind a more delightful or a more thoroughly enjoyable method of spending a summer holiday than by taking a driving tour through some portion of our own beautiful country. To those 'long in city pent' the effect of a continual change of scene, and the fact of being out so much in the fresh, pure air without fatigue, is one of indescribable enjoyment; those who have never journeyed thus can understand but little of the real pleasures of travelling.

To the driving tourist, time-tables, booked places, the anxiety of luggage (well might the ancient Romans call it *impedimentum*) are only things to be remembered with a shudder as belonging to a despotic age. He—the fortunate traveller aforesaid—can start on his journey just when he feels inclined; he is free to go where he will, just as his inclination or the scenery may prompt him; he can loiter at any spot that may take his fancy, and, resting, thoroughly enjoy and drink in the full beauty of the scene.

The country about Hounslow is flat and uninteresting to a degree. In the old coaching days, the heath—long since all enclosed—bore a well-earned, though an ill, reputation, and was a spot travellers were generally only too pleased to pass safely through without misadventure of any sort, or an acquaintance with the 'knights of the road.' Traversing such spots in the olden days must have been exciting enough,

though to the nervous and lonely wayfarer not altogether an excitement of an agreeable nature; then the heath must have presented a very different appearance to the peaceful, not to say dull, prosaic look it now bears. At Bedfont, the first little village we passed, and where we rested the horses at the wayside inn for gruel, we noted the picturesque old church and quaintly cut yew-trees, and were tempted to dismount and inspect the same, and were quite repaid for our short walk across the village green. We soon now reached Staines, but did not need to be reminded by the most liberal and abundant supply of stones on the roads that its name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon for stone. We crossed the Thames here on a fine old bridge, and soon afterwards began to mount Egham Hill—and a stiff mount it was too. From the top we had a grand view to the left over a finely-wooded country, and a fresh bracing west wind welcomed us to the summit. We now felt we had left in earnest the busy hum and ceaseless bustle of town life altogether behind, for a period of three months or more, and our spirits were elated accordingly. Our way before us was all unknown; possibly we might meet with some adventures, probably some discomforts; but, come what may, we knew our future would be one of much and continued enjoyment. The pleasures of anticipation, especially where the future is an unknown quantity, are great indeed! We were wandering westwards to explore in due time the beauties of both North and South Wales, not the guide-book beauties, but to traverse, to us, unknown ways and lands, and to discover for our-

selves beauty spots, and romantic scenery, little heeded or quite unknown to the general tourist. We could almost enter into the feelings of Columbus on his voyages of discovery, for was not ours, too, a voyage of discovery? But did ever mariner cruise in such a comfortable, steady ship as ours? Our phaeton was our ship, the roads of Old England our ocean; our anchor was weighed, our voyage commenced. No wonder our spirits were high, and we joined with a lark overhead in his song of gladness and freedom!

One of the advantages of a driving excursion—at least, speaking from my own experience—is, one never gets weary of it; the constant change of scene day by day, and the total change of character of scenery as the journey goes on, from wild mountains and lonely lakes and tarns to quiet pastoral scenes, with grand old abbeys and quaint old-world English homes and villages, with their picturesque greens and dear old churches, nearly all well worthy of a visit; again to the wild free moorlands where the air is so fresh and bracing; changing again, perchance, to a country full of interest in sturdy mediæval castles, magnificent in their decay; and so from the grand and wild to the peaceful and homelike. Again, perchance, to a portion of country full of old romance and strange traditions, entwined with old castles, manor-houses, &c. And so one finds continual change: even the necessity of passing at times through the busy, noisy, smoky, and, I may as well add, the wealthy, if intensely ugly, manufacturing towns, helps by contrast to make one's

enjoyment of the country keener even, perhaps, than ever.

Our stage for the night was Virginia Water, our stage for the morrow we knew not; such uncertainty is one of the delights of this method of travel. Each evening, while taking our ease at our inn, our general rule is to have our road and guide books out, and to discuss our next day's plans and wanderings; and what pleasurable excitements such discussions are, what anticipations for the morrow, what wonderings as to the weather, as to what we shall see, and what the scenery and roads will be like, and what and where our quarters for the night will be! Perchance, besides our guide-books, we are able to gather from the landlord or landlady, as the case may be, or that much abused but most civil and obliging of men, the ostler, something that may influence us in our choice of route.

But to return to our journey. The summit of Egham Hill reached, we soon began to descend, and a lovely road it was, bordered on either side with tall pines. Down the hill we quickly went, the brake hard on and the traces slack. At the bottom, some distance ahead, we saw our hotel for the night, the Wheatsheaf to wit, snugly ensconced in trees, and with comfortable-looking stables opposite, which gave promise of good quarters for our steeds. As we descended the hill we sounded the horn, which resulted, as it invariably does, in bringing the ostler to the fore. Very useful is the horn at times, especially when arriving late or otherwise in some sleepy village or country town, and when no one is about

and no ostler is to be at once discovered—that useful individual often being boots, messenger, and perchance gardener as well, and very often he is to be found anywhere but in the stable-yard—then the sound of the horn acts like magic, and help is generally forthcoming.

In the present case both landlord and ostler were brought forth, and our belongings were quickly unpacked and conveyed to our room, and shortly afterwards the horses were enjoying the luxury of loose boxes, and revelling in a plentiful supply of sweet straw; their corn, a liberal supply of course, not being forgotten. And so ended our first day's pilgrimage.

We fared well at the Wheatsheaf, and in the evening strolled out and saw the lake and fall and ruins. Very peaceful and restful did the mere look as we wandered along its silent shore in the gloaming, so different to the ceaseless bustle and roar of the London streets we had so lately left behind. The artificial cascade and ruins looked their best in the soft mystic light, and the gentle murmur of the fall was soothingly wafted on the still evening air.

Three months hence, on our return home, the whole scene appeared somewhat tame and poor and even commonplace, but that was after the wild tarns and lakes of Wales; but, compared to London, the spot in that witching evening hour looked wonderfully charming—so much for contrasts.

We rested well that night, and awoke to a warm hazy morning, with a light southerly breeze, which gave promise of a hot summer's day. We therefore

decided to start betimes, so as to make our first stage in the comparative cool of the early morning, to rest during mid-day, and to proceed to our destination in the evening. And what a delicious time for driving a fine summer's evening is! Can there be anything more delightful, I wonder, than to drive in the gloaming through a beautiful country in a well-built phaeton, behind a pair of willing horses? The tramp, tramp, clatter, clatter, of their hoofs, the measured rattling of the pole chains, the steady crunching sounds of the wheels on the roads, the pleasant, easy swing of the carriage, the sudden dashing through dark overhanging woods, the weird light of the lamps, and the enhanced mysterious beauty of the scenery in the dim, uncertain light, are all things combined to make such a drive something to be remembered. The exhilarating feelings and effect of such are worth a whole season of the monotonous routine of Hyde Park. How cheerily, too, sounds the horn in the still air, as an awkward corner is turned, or as some slow waggon or wain is overtaken! How the trees, hedges, and sleepy cottages, with dark overhanging trees, seem to fly by! How kindly welcome and friendly sounds the oft-repeated 'Good-night' from cottager and lonely wayfarer, so cheerfully and often given.

And here I may remark—weather, inns, and roads permitting, for all three have, of course, to be duly considered—we generally, if possible, endeavour to make our day's stage some twenty miles or so, more or less as the case may be, dividing our day's work, as far as practicable, into two stages of as

nearly equal distance as we are able. It is astonishing in England how easily—I might almost add how naturally—such stages can be taken, and how regularly accommodation (varying considerably, of course) is to be had. Many of the inns—most I might say—are those of the old coaching days, when ten-mile stages were always to be had; and of these very many more exist than anyone who has not travelled by road would suppose. Their coaching and posting business has of course gone for ever, but farmers attending market, commercial travellers, &c., give them their support; and in Wales and other wild countries, where farmers and commercials are seldom seen, fishermen and tourists well supply their place. And so we have found, from one end of England to the other, a plentiful supply of inns of some sort or another. Rough quarters of necessity both horses and ourselves have had to put up with at times, but on the whole we have fared very well, and enjoyed what little roughing we experienced.

I value my horses, they are as old and trusted friends to me. Several thousands of miles over all kinds and conditions of roads, through all weathers—sunshine and storm—have we journeyed together, and I have brought them home, driving direct from Scotland, as fresh as possible, and playfully shying at the first London omnibus they saw. That is a proof of what horses with careful and kind treatment and proper driving can do. The great secret in taking a long journey with horses is, gentle driving; we generally, nay almost always, walked all the hills, ourselves as well as the horses, for who would

wish to hurry on a journey of this kind? For such were not the railways specially invented? and they had better be whirled through space by them; but for ourselves, we delight in the country. There is so much to see everywhere, from the glorious sky overhead to the meanest flower growing amidst our most beautiful but unappreciated hedgerows.

Driving thus carefully, and sparing our horses on heavy roads and steep hills, and seeing after their welfare as well as our own, although I have taken each summer for many years past now long driving tours, extending over some three months or more each time, I have never had my horses laid up; nor have I, as far as I can remember, ever been delayed a single day by any mishap to either of my steeds. Many others who have essayed driving by road have not been so fortunate, and have exclaimed how lucky I was. Now, although there must be of necessity a certain amount of chance and risk, which cannot of course be avoided, be you ever so careful, considering the continual change of stabling and drinking-water—the former sometimes cold, and even damp and draughty; the latter occasionally quite unfit for cattle—the heavy roads, too, and long stages in hilly countries are often very trying; still, with all these disadvantages, as I have said before, I have never had my horses laid up, a result I attribute solely to the gentle driving, and the care I have taken both in looking after and sparing them whenever possible. I have, as a matter of fact, brought them back to their stables on the return from my several journeys, not only showing no signs

of fatigue, but looking as fresh and well as when they started; and with a day's rest or so, or even if necessary without, quite fit to undertake another similar journey, were such required.

I fear I may have wearied you, kind reader, by this long digression, but our stage to-day, though full of interest, is not one to be easily described.

After leaving Virginia Water, the road led towards Windsor Forest, between dark overhanging trees, which shielded us pleasantly from the sun: for even thus early in the morning it was more than warm enough to be agreeable. We trotted gaily along, passing a picturesque-looking old inn to the right, which seemed so solitary we wondered how it could exist at all; after which we soon entered the forest, and very beautiful it is, but a description of it would be so much like that of any other similar one, that I refrain from saying much, especially as it is so near London, and therefore easy of access and comparatively well known. After traversing some beautiful woods we soon reached a more open part of the forest, and just caught a glimpse to the right, in the far distant horizon, of certain well-known landmarks of the environs of London, such as Hampstead and Richmond Hills, and beyond and between which a bluey-grey haze told us where the greatest city of modern, or of all times, lay. Farther on we came to a grand view of Windsor Castle, with the keep standing proudly out of a background of sky and far distant country, lost together in a golden mist. This I at once recognized as the point of view taken by David Cox in his fine painting of the same.

We continued our drive, passing such fine old timber as only England can show, till we almost came under the shade of the grand old pile, when we turned to the left and entered Windsor town. This had no attraction for us; we therefore drove quickly through, and were once more in the country, on our way to Maidenhead. Not by the regular turnpike or main road, but by by-ways, as we found on our map there were such, and we deemed for many reasons they would be pleasanter than the old coach road, although less direct. And as we were travelling to enjoy ourselves and to see the country we did not begrudge the distance. Our choice of route was fortunate, as it afforded us the grateful shade of overhanging trees, for the sun was now scorching hot; it was one of those real old-fashioned summer days that, like so many other good old-fashioned things, seem to be passing altogether away from us.

We were now in a farming country, and here we could not but perceive that the old was ever giving place to the new—the things of yesterday were not those of to-day. We must not lament, for so it ever was, and so it ever will be whilst this world of ours exists. And possibly all this is for the best, and is as it should be; but one cannot but feel the change is not altogether a gain, at least in an artistic and æsthetic point of view. The steam plough—in which by no human possibility can any beauty be discovered—is taking the place of the old picturesque team of our forefathers. How could Burns have ever written his sweet songs behind such an engine?

Then we have the steam thrashing-machine—most useful I grant, and in an economical point of view in every way superior to the old-fashioned flail or horse thresher. Still, as the corn is by its aid quickly thrashed in the field, the grand old thoroughly English farm homestead, with its comfortable-looking stacks, giving one the idea of peace and plenty, is being slowly but as certainly improved out of existence.

And so with all modern improvements, it is a sad but very real fact to find the same loss of beauty everywhere; it seems as if utility and beauty were sworn enemies. Take the picturesque old mail coach, with its cheery horn and scarlet-coated guard. What has the most useful but most ugly locomotive that has usurped its place to offer in contrast but unalloyed ugliness? So again with old and new ships. What could be more grandly beautiful than the glorious old three-decker? How magnificent and stately did it not look! What more hideous than a modern ironclad? And so one might make endless comparisons, only we know 'comparisons are odious.' We must be content to know we are advancing, but as a lover of the beautiful, and of which so much still remains—the homelike, simple, mellow beauty of Old England—I cannot but feel the so-called progress is not all gain. The beauty of the past—a beauty that, once gone, can never be recovered—is being lost in the improvement of the present. It is a very pertinent question, and one full of import, Why is progress so antagonistic to beauty?

We passed, about midway to Maidenhead, a cheerful-looking red-brick hotel by the river-side, with boats and steam-launches at anchor, and were almost tempted to rest there, it looked so inviting, but not noticing any stable accommodation we continued on our way. We had now plenty of shelter, and how deliciously the softened sunshine shone through the refreshing green of the countless leaves overhead!

The Bear at Maidenhead had the look of comfort from the outside, so we put up there, and were in no way disappointed with our choice of hostelrie. In fact, much road work had made us quite adepts at choosing an hotel. We seldom made a mistake in our selection, and often, very often, fared better than we could reasonably expect; hardly ever, I might almost say never, worse.

We had intended, after a good rest here and a stroll by the river, to have continued our journey to Henley, but dark ominous clouds were gathering round in all directions, and distant rumblings warned us of the approach of what appeared might possibly be a heavy and prolonged thunderstorm. We decided, therefore, to spend the night beneath the sign of the Bear.

The heat was still intense, and as we sat outside our hotel, endeavouring to obtain what little air we could, we noticed heavy rain-drops come down, as large as half-crowns, but the storm, though apparently raging all around, did not come to us.

Presently there was a commotion in the street and loud shouts. We looked up and saw that a phaeton

and single horse, with a gentleman driving, had bolted. The driver appeared to have lost all control over his horse, and the groom stood up helplessly behind. The lot were soon out of sight. Whoever the gentleman was, he was lucky to have cleared the streets of Maidenhead without a serious accident. The incident caused quite an excitement in the place, and for long afterwards we noticed small groups of three and four discussing the matter. I heard afterwards that the horse bolted along the road till he was exhausted, and then only was his owner able to do anything with him. Either the horse was a most dangerous animal, dear at a gift, or the man could not drive. From the glance I had of the affair, I concluded the latter was the case.

CHAPTER II.

Man and Horse—Old Cottages—Picturesque Interior—Old and New Builders—Bisham Church—Medmenham Abbey—Henley—Fair Mile—A Sleepy Village—A Road Monster—Fine View—Bensington—Good Quarters—An Old Cross—Oxford.

A THUNDERSTORM of considerable severity had continued more or less during the whole of the night, apparently all around us, but save a few heavy drops of rain now and again, and the continual rumbling of distant thunder and flashes of lightning, we totally escaped the same in some strange manner. But nevertheless we had the advantage of a glorious morning, with a cool, fresh bracing air, and large white clouds were sailing gaily along overhead in a sea of the deepest blue. Such a morning was one to be remembered, and simply to exist on such a day was a great pleasure. We started early, and promised ourselves a long stage; the dust was the only fly in our ointment, for though we had had no rain to speak of, we had a sufficiency of wind to make the dust disagreeable.

We quickly trotted along the main road of Maidenhead, and were walking up a stiff ascent out of the town, when we stopped to witness a battle between a man and a jibbing horse. Do what the man would, the horse would not move; he held his ears back, took the bit between his teeth, and kicked

and showed himself a regular good-for-nothing brute. There was no mistake about it. We suggested to the man, who was trying to persuade the horse by gentle means, that a liberal use of the whip was what was required. The man, who seemed a very decent specimen of humanity, complained bitterly to me that that was just what he had done a short time before, and had used it of necessity pretty liberally till he made the brute do his work, but some over-zealous humane, kind-hearted no doubt, but silly follower of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had prosecuted him and had him fined 2*l.*; and, as he complained to me, he dare not use his whip now. He was a poor man and could not afford to lose the use of his horse, which he had bought and kept, and asked me what he was to do. Of course I could only say there was simply nothing to be done with such an animal if he would or could not use the whip, and after watching a time to see the result of the struggle, we continued on our journey, leaving the man and horse on the spot where we first saw them. Certainly some people appear to think all animals are perfect and men alone are brutes, in which estimate I by no means agree: too much is often made of the animal and the man is made the brute. There may be some men (not many I trust) who care little what hovels their tenants inhabit so long as their horses are luxuriously lodged. Certainly there are some who deem it a cruelty to use the lash to a vicious horse, over tender-hearted people who estimate it a sin to exterminate a wasp, and consider it little short of

murder to kill a bee. Well, opinions in this world differ, and perhaps it is as well they should.

A few miles farther on we came upon a large open common: the freshening breeze swept over its wild, free surface, and the grasses and shrubs bent before the summer winds. How bracing and free is the air on our commons, heaths, moors, and downs; what grand playgrounds for the nation do they not make! Much has been written of the beauties of flowers; it appears to me strange that writers and poets should have so overlooked the simple loveliness of the humble grass, 'England's fadeless green.' What would this land of ours be without its rich carpet of sward? So refreshful and restful to the weary eye, I do love the rich, subdued, glorious green of the English landscape.

We shortly left the main road and turned to the right along a hilly and picturesque by-way; the country now became very interesting, and the scenery improved every mile. We passed several wayside cottages with well-attended gardens, and all showing a love for flowers. The road had an old-world look: a look it might have borne two hundred years or more ago, save perhaps some outbuildings and farm-houses might have appeared somewhat newer, and without, what now was theirs, the incomparable bloom of age. We could not but help noticing how natural all the cottages looked: no attempt at building for the sake of beauty or the picturesque, yet both were there. In contrast to which we could not but recall some cottages we had passed near Maidenhead, evidently somewhat recently built and intended

to be both picturesque and beautiful, and which were neither—and why? Because beauty is not to be bought or made; it must come naturally, or it won't come at all. Those old cottages, so irregular, in such contrast to the regular irregularity of the modern ones. Did the constructors of old first think of the outside appearance, or of a picturesque porch, or of the position of windows? often sacrificing interior economy and utility in the study for what the modern builder is pleased to term the picturesque. Not they! They had not so learnt their business; they just planned the rooms, passages, and interiors as to what was most required and needful, and they placed the windows, chimneys, &c., just where they were wanted. They obtained comfort inside, and by not seeking after it, a look of fitness and natural beauty, suggesting to the passer-by an idea of homeliness and comfort. They did not attempt to hide bad construction with senseless and useless ornaments, put on here and there without reason, and therefore worse than nothing at all, but used what little ornament they could afford in the construction of a quaint chimney-stack or a gable-end, or, perchance, an ample porch, similar probably, but not exactly like any other; and the result is, these old cottages, as artists' portfolios so frequently show, are things of beauty, and, as many a picture in grand London houses prove, a joy for ever. Would any artist care to paint, or picture-fancier care to purchase, a representation of a modern picturesque (save the mark!) cottage? I trow not! Now we have the opportunity, let us take a glance

inside one of them. The first thing that attracts our attention in the living-room or kitchen, whichever it may be called, is the rich, harmonious colouring of the whole; the red brick or tile floor, though it may be a trifle cold to the feet, is still, in my opinion, preferable, where no carpets are, to bare boards; at any rate it looks warm and comfortable, and that is no small matter; and it is clean. Then the unceiled beams are picturesque in effect and superior to an unbroken surface of whitewash. The ample fireplace, with its old oak settles and high brown chimney-piece, speaks a welcome; and an old-fashioned pot hanging with a chain over the fire suggests something savoury for the good-man's dinner. The deep lattice window, with its diamond panes and deep recess filled with rows of red flower-pots, with here and there, as by contrast, a broken bit of blue stoneware doing duty for the same, all combine to present an interior full of the most charming combinations of colour, and giving one the idea of plain, simple comfort.

Our road now became somewhat hilly. At the top of one ascent we had a glorious view ahead, and to the right, of the Thames, winding here and there; and anon, partly hidden behind clumps of trees, we could make out Great Marlow—so beloved by all Thames boating men—and Bisham Abbey, and the quaint old Norman church almost hidden in trees, and close to the river. How often has that old church not been painted, and how often in the future will it not form the subject for pictures of artists yet unborn? Calmly the river winds round its quiet

churchyard, and within the hallowed pile brave men of the stormy days of old sleep now so peacefully. Farther on we saw Medmenham Abbey overshadowed by dark woods, and surrounded by bright meadows; we could make out the ruins very clearly, though not much is left of the old abbey but some ivy-covered arches and crumbling stonework. It is indeed a lovely spot, and in a glorious position; those monks of old knew where as well as how to build—a grand sweep of river in front, and rich land around. The building

> Lies perhaps a little low,
> Because those monks preferred a hill behind
> To shelter their devotion from the wind.

It is indeed a pity such a goodly spot, at one time holy ground, should have had in after times such an evil history. A century or rather more ago, a society of profligate men, who called themselves monks of St. Francis, formed a club here which they termed the Hell-Fire Club; their infamous revelries in the old abbey are matters of history. Their motto, 'Fay ce que voudras,' is still in existence over the doorway.

We had a stiff hill now before us and soon lost sight altogether of the Thames, and here we perceived the first signs of the storm of the previous night, for quite suddenly the dusty roads ceased, and the ground became heavy, wet, and muddy, and the leaves of the trees and hedgerows looked wonderfully bright and fresh. From what I could gather from the papers, the storm appeared to have been

both very severe and general over England, but we strangely escaped it altogether at Maidenhead.

After a pleasant drive over high ground, we began a sudden and very steep descent into Henley, and at the same time heavy drops of rain falling, warned us to make 'all taut.' The spots soon became a heavy shower, and we had only just time to drive into the yard of the Catherine Wheel to escape a heavy storm. Here mine host recognized us, and the ostler the horses, from our having rested here on previous journeys. It was very pleasing to be thus welcomed, and within the landlord (now since, I am sorry to say, dead) took good care of us, and, without, our horses fared equally well. We had a charming room, with windows surrounded by virginia creeper and honeysuckle, and we felt we could to a certain extent enter into the feeling of the poet Shenstone, who wrote, though of another inn—the Red Lion—in this town :—

> Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
> Where'er his stages may have been,
> May sigh to think he still has found
> The warmest welcome at an inn !

Though only mid-day the sky had assumed a very dark and gloomy appearance, the rain came heavily and steadily down, the fall in the barometer was equally heavy and steady. So we concluded as we were in such good quarters to rest here the night, making another short stage, and trust for better fortune on the morrow. And fortune did favour us, for we had a gloriously fine morning, and more than

that, a rising barometer and a north-west wind, which gave promise of a fine day. The road leading out of Henley towards Oxford, by which we were journeying, was very beautiful; for a long way it was level and broad, with a grand avenue of fine old elms on either side, and a pleasing view of wooded hills to the front. Henley is, if not altogether in itself a charming town, very charmingly situated; the view from the bridge looking both up and down, especially down, is one to be remembered. At the end of the Fair Mile, as the drive between the avenue of trees is most appropriately called, the road turned suddenly to the left, and we had a long and very stiff mount till we reached very high ground, where we turned round to admire the view, looking over Henley. In driving across country it is always worth while to look back now and again, you get quite a change of scene which is very pleasing. We soon entered a wood or forest of considerable extent. We observed here, what we have often noticed before, though never perhaps so plainly, the intense positive blue the distance appears when viewed between the stems of trees (or any other similar objects), when near together and close at hand; the effect is very pronounced. The reason is evident, being caused by the sudden contrast of extreme distance and objects in the immediate foreground, when the latter are close to each other, and give, as it were, a narrow framework to only a small portion of the distance at a time.

Almost at once on leaving the wood we entered upon a most out-of-the-world, old-fashioned-looking

village, or small town, yclept Nettlebed, a sleepy-looking place, a place that gave you the impression that you must surely have been dreaming, and that after all you were living in the seventeenth and not the nineteenth century, and that railways, telegraphs, telephones, &c, &c., were an imagination of your wandering brain. The houses and buildings looked so of the olden time, and appeared too so well built, that they had not needed or received much in the way of repairs or alterations for generations past. What had done for the forefathers of the inhabitants of Nettlebed, still did for the present occupiers, and from a glance of them as we passed by, we concluded that they would go on for many a year yet. Somehow you retained the impression that the buildings and town would be much the same as now a century hence. The old inn, with its signboard swinging restlessly but not noiselessly, was there, with its open courtyard and stabling, just the same possibly as it was when the last coach took its last change here.

How or where its present custom came from was a puzzle—but then how or why Nettlebed existed at all was an equal, if not greater puzzle. Perched high up on the top of a range of hills, since the coaches have disappeared and the railways have selected to leave the spot to its solitude, Nettlebed seems certainly much out of the world. As we trotted through the village, the rattling of the carriage brought no spectators forth, as it nearly always does; the place appeared in an enchanted peaceful sleep—a dull, heavy sleep perhaps—and sleeping

thus we left it, and asleep still no doubt we shall find it should we ever pass this way again.

We quickly descended out of the town, and as if by contrast, and to assure us we had not been dreaming, and that we really existed in this nineteenth century of universal progress, we met one of those modern monsters, the outcome of our present advanced civilization, a traction engine, to wit! A huge, ugly, noisy, dangerous monster, a monster in which there was no possibility of discovering any hidden beauty or redeeming feature. Expecting, I presume, to meet nobody, or possibly considering anybody nobody, it monopolized the road. We sounded the horn, the driver appeared astonished; we sounded it again with an extra flourish, and this time with effect—he (the driver aforesaid) comprehended he had to share the road with another traveller. The monster took the ditch, there would otherwise not have been room for us to pass; we held the horses well in hand, and were glad to leave behind and out of sight the ungainly machine. To ladies, or nervous riders or drivers, or to shying horses, these engines, traversing the highroads, not always with careful men in charge, are a real nuisance and a positive danger. The road continued at a high elevation, and the air was most exhilarating and invigorating. We drove slowly that we might enjoy it to the utmost, and could not help feeling how much, how very much, travellers by rail lose. The beautiful scenery and pure, fresh, bracing air are not for them, and when the roads wind over the hills, or moors, or downs, or along the lovely vales of old

England, what a loss is theirs! Well, perhaps they hardly know their loss, and if so, it is a case in point, 'where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise,' seeing that the coaches are not, and therefore few can travel by road, would they ever so much.

Presently we came to the end of the hill, along the crest of which we had travelled for so long, and before us lay a long steep descent of Gaysdown Hill. At the top we rested to enjoy the view. Far, far away as the eye could reach lay broad before us some of the finest and richest land in England. The plains of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, with all their wealth of verdure and beauty, were spread beneath us. Woods, fields, rivers, hills, quiet hamlets, from which the blue smoke curled so peacefully, church steeples and towers, mansions and farms, all, all lay before us. We gazed in silence upon the panorama, drinking in the inspiration of the scene. It was a magnificent prospect, it was unhackneyed, untravelled, and unknown. Were I an artist, I would paint that scene, and call the subject 'England.' Were it worthily done, it would be a picture true and good, and far above the prosaic level of modern landscape art. We were loth to descend to the plains, but we could not remain longer where we were; so, with one last fond look, and tracing our road for miles ahead, we continued on our way. Bensington, the first village we entered, pleased us very much. A clear quiet stream flowed along its street, whilst arching trees met overhead; almost all the cottages showed a love for flowers, and were, besides, clean and very neat.

Two hotels we noticed, both bearing evidence of having done a large and flourishing trade in the days of coaching, but now they both looked sadly forlorn; forlorn, but still too proud to lament their long-lost grandeur. We noticed flowers in the windows of one, and not knowing which to choose, this slight matter decided us in our selection, and we soon found we had decided well. The landlady (a widow of some forty summers or more) was a comely, chatty body, and she soon busied herself to get our repast ready, and she proved to be a capital cook. We expected little here, contented if our horses got a rest and a bait, but we fared sumptuously; lamb, green peas, tempting sweets, stewed fruits, cheese, and most delicious home-brewed ale, cool and clear, was a meal fit for a king, especially as the cooking was simply perfection. It may have been our drive and the bracing air (which made our appetites so keen) had something to do with making things seem as they did, it may have been we expected so little; be that as it may, we could not wish to fare better. We found fishermen often stayed here, being near the Thames. I am not a fisherman myself, but I wish every brother of the art long life, for to them is due the existence of many a comfortable and cosy hostelrie and good fare, where, without the patrons of the gentle craft, poor indeed would be the accommodation. We continued on our journey towards Oxford, our destination for the day, the road running near to the Thames, and many an enchanting peep of the same we had from time to time. A short distance from Bensington we entered Dor-

chester, crossing the river on a very handsome and beautifully designed stone bridge, so good, indeed, as to make me judge it must have been the work of the old monks, who had a priory here, of which some remains still exist. In the town or village—I hardly know which to call the place, it scarcely appeared important enough to be termed a town, and yet it was almost too large to be a village—we noticed a very fine church, in the yard of which was a beautiful cross, which we inspected, and discovered it had been restored and re-erected to the memory of somebody else. Thus, after doing duty some hundreds of years, probably till the time of the Reformation, it had for generations been laid low, and was now doing service as a fresh memorial for a stranger. We found the church open and took a glance inside; the interior was very fine and worthy in every respect of the beautiful exterior; they must have been master builders, the monks who raised this edifice. The rector, I judged from the decorations, was a High Churchman, but from what I saw of the place and its inhabitants, I could not but wonder to myself whether or not he was the right man in the right place. One thing the High Churchman does, he keeps his church in proper decorative (if I may use the word) order and repair; you will not find him allowing fine stonework and carvings to be covered and plastered over with hideous whitewash, nor will he allow old oak, richly carved, curious and rare, to be painted, or, even worse, sold, when the so-called restorations are being made from time to time.

The road now became very level, and was

splendid going, so we trotted along at a good pace. We soon passed the picturesque village of Nuneham Courtenay, almost buried in trees, after which we shortly came in sight of Oxford. The view of the city from this point, with its towers, domes, and notable buildings rising boldly forth, each with a decidedly individual character, was most striking, and has been pronounced by no less a personage than Sir Walter Scott as 'one of the most beautiful in the world.'

The entrance by Magdalen Bridge and tower, and along 'the High,' that glorious street of streets, with its ancient colleges and buildings, is simply perfect. One could not alter it to improve it, and of few things in this world can the same be said. Of Oxford itself I need say but little. I am not writing a guide-book, and the city is or ought to be well known to all Englishmen. We hired a guide, and spent several most happy and delightful hours wandering among the colleges and grounds; beautiful indeed they are, carrying one back to the old mediæval days. The present and past here seem for once in unity. The delicious fresh green of the lawns and trees contrasts wonderfully with the old grey crumbling walls, coming close up to the same as they do. Oxford is a beautiful, a noble city; there is none other like it anywhere to be found outside this England of ours, and within, Cambridge alone can at all compare with it. If English people only knew how beautiful some of their cities are, such as Oxford, Cambridge, Shrewsbury, Bath, and a host of others, it would

be a good thing for them. Speaking of Oxford, an American writer, Richard Grant White, says: 'Besides the colleges themselves, the views around them are of a peculiar and an enchanting beauty. The view across Merton Fields, behind Merton College, is perfection. The wide expanse of vivid green coming close up to the college walls, the noble old trees, the gabled roofs and mullioned windows of Merton, and Magdalen's noble tower closing the vista, the forms of its strongly outlined buttresses and pinnacles softened and enriched by the distance, make this view seem rather like the ideal composition of an imaginative landscapist, than the unpremeditated result of man's seeking for his own comfort and convenience.' There is one thing to be noted about the buildings of Oxford. The stone used in the colleges, churches, and public edifices is of a somewhat fragile kind, and consequently has crumbled quickly, and this gives to the buildings an appearance of greater antiquity than is really theirs. This sometimes has caused visitors to despise houses and shops which look lowly by comparison, and which here and there, as it were, are almost elbowed out by the colleges. Their feelings would possibly quickly change if they learnt that in many instances the humble despised house or shop, as the case may be, is ages older than its gigantic neighbours, and was in existence years before even their foundations were laid.

CHAPTER III.

Nearly Coming to Grief—A Lonely Road—Witney—An Old Inn—A Bleak Country—Burford—Old Ruins—A Picturesque Village—Cirencester—Fine Old Church—A Gothic Tomb—English Farmers—The View from Birdlip—A Steep Descent—Gloucester: the Cathedral—Railway *versus* Road.

We wandered about Oxford all the morning, and did not leave till late in the afternoon, when we nearly came most ignominiously to grief on starting. Just as we had driven out of the courtyard of the hotel, and had cleared the archway, we gave the word all right to the ostler, who let go the horses, and our man duly mounted behind, and when in the centre of the road and amidst a maze of traffic we found to our surprise the horses would not answer the reins. Fortunately they stopped at the sound of our voice, as we had long ago trained them to do, our groom was down in a moment, and for a minute or so we blocked the way. It was a mystery what the matter could possibly be; but a quick examination of the harness showed a buckle of the near reins had got firmly caught in the hook provided to hold the bearing-reins (which being abolished for ever, the hook should have been the same, but was left for ornament), and consequently we had absolutely no power at all over the horses. It was a strange mishap, and soon put right, and we proceeded on

our way all well; but in such a crowded street it might have been an awkward matter for us. I only mention the affair to show how easily an accident may occur, and how necessary it is for the driver to be always on the *qui vive*, ready and prepared for any emergency.

As it was late we arranged to make only a short stage of some twelve miles or so to Witney. The road after leaving Oxford became somewhat bleak, there were few houses, if any, to be seen, and now and again we passed through solitary dark woods. Altogether the way was a gloomy one, but the mind has many a mood, and the loneliness of the road suited our meditations. We crossed a long bridge, and paid a heavy toll for the luxury of doing so; the tollkeeper seemed surprised to see us, by which we concluded the traffic was not great that way. Witney we reached in due course, and which appeared to us to consist mainly of one street about a mile in length, with substantial buildings and but little life. We drove very nearly to the end of the same, looking each side for a suitable hostelrie for the night. We passed one or two, but not being pleased with the outside aspects of those we saw, nearly turned to reinspect the most promising of those we had passed, when a bend in the street just at the outside of the town revealed to us just what we required, and more than we had hoped to discover here, a charming old-fashioned inn, a relic of the old coaching times, with ample courtyard and stables, a wandering old building, and a general look that spoke a welcome, and gave promise of good

fare for both man and beast. Nor were we disappointed; we had a delightful sitting-room, and a cosy, cheerful bedroom, the linen fragrant of lavender, and of a whiteness that would put to shame a London laundress, were shame possible in such a being. The courtyard of these old-fashioned inns is to me delightful ground. I light my pipe here, and make a general inspection, and if I find the ostler, as most frequently I do, a decent sort of fellow, and inclined to be loquacious, I allow him to talk, and often find him to be very entertaining. I obtain at times a curious, and no doubt a fairly truthful history of the neighbourhood and surrounding inhabitants, looked at through an ostler's pair of spectacles. If he is one of the right sort, he can tell you many a curious anecdote of the old coaching days, of the past history of the inn when it was in its full glory, and the largest posting-house in the county. He will tell you of rival coaches, and of the lords and county gentry who used to drive. How one coach was upset here, how another got into the river through a dark night and a not too sober driver. He will take you round and show you the range of stabling, now converted into other uses, and where the mail changes were kept. Will relate to you with much gusto how a mail coach was attacked by the 'knights of the road' when his grandfather was driving, and how by his skill as a whip, &c., he managed to escape the same. He will give you information of the road you are about to travel, of what is of interest on the way, of the state of things generally, and will sometimes suggest a variation of your route, and the advan-

tages of the same, both in the scenery and country traversed, and the condition of the road. And as a rule his advice may be taken with advantage, though, as in every rule, there are exceptions. It is pleasing too to watch your horses groomed, and to observe how thoroughly they appreciate it after a long stage; how they revel in their bed of straw, especially if they are fortunate enough to luxuriate in loose boxes; and how delighted they appear to come to you for a pat and a cheery word. Horses are intelligent animals, quite as much so as dogs, and if equally noticed and cared for will become quite as fond of and attached to their masters.

We rose early the next morning, tempted by a glorious day. We paid our usual visit to our steeds before breakfast, and were early on the road, having first inspected a remarkably fine old church close to our hotel, the interior of which contained many curious monuments, and from the churchyard of which a pleasing view is to be had. The road at first passed through a rich, fertile, and picturesque country; but as it gradually rose mile after mile, the vegetation became by degrees less and less luxuriant, till the hedgerows gave way to stone walls, and on the top of the high ground (for we had ascended till we were on very high ground) there were no trees at all, or any green to be seen but grass, save here and there a stunted ghost of a larch, or a twisted, bent, gnarled caricature of an oak that proved how hard was the struggle to exist in this bleak moorland. To-day, however, the air was delightful, and though calm in the valley, up here the

wind was in force and bracing. These moorland heights are grand places on hot summer days. But more undesirable spots on bleak winter mornings, with a raw 'north-easter' blowing, could hardly be imagined. Driving thus, so many hundreds of feet above the level of the sea, we inhaled the powerful west wind, so soft, and yet so cool and invigorating. It came to us direct from the Atlantic, over three thousand miles of ocean, which was too small to contain it; it swept over the hills and heights of England, bringing health and life whither it went.

By-and-by we approached Burford, a small melancholy, deserted-looking town, situated some half a mile off the main road, and built in a hollow, evidently for much needed shelter. Just before Burford we noticed some interesting old ruins to the right over a stream, but as neither our guide-book ('Patterson's Roads,' 1826 edition) nor our maps (Smith's reduced Ordnance Survey) made any mention of them, to our astonishment, we were with regret obliged to leave them behind, not knowing the why or wherefore of their existence.

Here we turned to the left in the direction of Cirencester, leaving the main road, running along a bleak high table-land as far as the eye could see. This must have been a pleasant stage in the winter time in the old coaching days! We noticed the farm-houses as we passed were provided with lightning-conductors; in such an exposed, bleak, and elevated position, no doubt they were a necessity, in fact it was by no means a spot one would select to be caught in a thunderstorm. We now commenced gradually to

descend, and as we descended the country began to assume a more cultivated and hospitable look. As by this time we had travelled a considerable distance without coming across any quarters where we could rest and bait our horses, we were tempted to pull up on the green margin of the road, under the shelter of some overhanging beeches, for we had now reached a country of hedges and trees, and very luxuriant and beautiful did it appear, after our bleak drive. Here we picked handfuls of the sweetest clover, which Beauty and Amy (for by those names were our gallant steeds known) munched with great and evident satisfaction.

A stream of clear water was at hand, and this helped to refresh them, and us. We took the opportunity of the rest to examine our map and road book. We discovered there were several villages mentioned on our road, and so we started, hoping that in one of them we should find some sort of a wayside inn that might afford us accommodation.

We passed two or three hamlets, one with a church quaintly situated on the top of a sort of conical hill or mound, but without discovering in any of what we were in search. We then came to a sudden descent, and at the bottom of the same we found one of the most unique and beautiful villages it has been our good fortune to come across for many a long day. At the end we entered was the church, a very picturesque one, as became such a pretty spot, close to which was a private house, possibly the vicarage, buried in trees of various kinds; along the left of the road ran a stream of considerable breadth, and as clear as crystal; along the other side were

cottages and houses, all stone built, and with large and well-kept gardens, full of old-fashioned flowers, and, after all, are they not the best? The sunlight was shimmering down on this spot, making everything look gay and bright; happy, peaceful Bibury, for such was the place named, our map informed us.

We drove slowly on, listening to the murmuring of the stream, and were so taken up with admiring everything, that we had nearly forgotten that both our horses and ourselves were in want of quarters. At the very end of the street we discovered our inn, with garden in front leading down to the rivulet, and capital stabling. We were in luck's way after all. Both landlord and landlady came out to welcome us; as there was no ostler the landlord came to show us the stables, and the landlady to do her best for us indoors. They had few travellers by road, and not many visitors, we learnt; how ever these little inns in remote villages exist at all is a problem that has puzzled me not a little, and one I can never hope to solve. We were shown into a cheerful room, and were provided with some most excellent cold beef, fresh gathered salad—we saw them gathering it out of the garden opposite—capital cheese and ale. What better fare could a hungry traveller desire? I only mention this matter to show how, even in remote country villages, where one would expect but little, the wayfarer of the present day need not fear he will be badly treated. At the worst, tea and bread-and-butter and eggs are generally to be had, and fairly good. We were sorry to leave Bibury, it was such a happy,

peaceful-looking place, a spot wherein contentment appeared to reign supreme. The landlord was a cheerful man too, and took a very sunny view of life, a man evidently of good health and spirits. Well, contentment is a great thing, but I consoled myself that, after all, life in such a quiet spot must be a dull and monotonous affair. I wonder if the glamour of the bright day had anything to do with making Bibury appear so lovely? As we drove out of the village we passed a busy water-wheel, affording life to the scene, and some cows were drinking in the stream, giving colour to the whole.

The road now became hilly, and continued so till we reached Cirencester, which town, when we entered, we discovered to be full of militiamen, and a very noisy lot they were too! We drove into the main street and halted here to hold a discussion as to which hotel we should honour with our presence. On a former journey we had fared well at the Fleece, a very old-fashioned inn, but we recollected our bedroom there had a sort of trap-door in the ceiling, which was half open all night, and being a ghostly sort of a chamber, and having amused ourselves by reading some of Edgar Allan Poe's thrilling stories before retiring to rest, we did not sleep well. And so we decided for the more modern, but still ancient hostelrie yclept the King's Head.

The next morning we rose to a hopelessly wet day. A dull leaden sky, with a falling barometer and a south-westerly wind, with a continuous downpour, did not promise well for continuing our journey. It never really ceased raining the whole of the day, but

at intervals it did not rain quite so heavily, and we selected one of these to inspect the town, and to see if we could discover anything of interest and worthy of our notice. We found Cirencester a clean, pleasing little town, with a fine park at one end, and an Agricultural College, a large handsome building, close upon the outskirts. It is situated, like most English towns, upon a river; this one, the Churn (a good name for a stream), was quite new to me. It is astonishing in driving across country what a number of rivers you run against, of the very existence and names of which before you were quite unaware. But to us the chief attraction in Cirencester was the fine old abbey church, just opposite our hotel. It is a magnificent old building, and contains numerous brasses and curious monuments; the stained glass, too, is old and rare. The porch is a marvel of sculptured beauty, richly decorated with quaint old figures of minstrels and others. It is indeed a grand old pile. Surely there is nothing in this world, the work of man's hands, more beautiful than a fine old Gothic church. They are solemn poems writ in stone. It must have been from such a one as this that Henry Kirke White drew his exquisite and touching picture, when he says :—

> Lay me in a Gothic tomb,
> In whose solemn fretted gloom
> I may lie in mouldering state
> With all the grandeur of the great.
> Over me, magnificent,
> Carve a stately monument.
> Then thereon my statue lay,
> With hands in attitude to pray,

And angels serve to hold my head,
Weeping o'er the marble dead.

Could any other than a Gothic building, and that an ecclesiastical edifice, have inspired such words? I trow not. There is to me a feeling of deep religious awe in such places—a feeling not to be described, but utterly different and at variance with the impression produced upon my mind by the stiff, formal, feelingless, classical architecture. To me Westminster Abbey is a wealth of beauty, a sight of whose dim interior turns my thoughts to solemn things. St. Paul's only impresses me with its size and a certain feeling of vague grandeur, but inspires me with no religious thoughts whatever. It oppresses me with its want of beauty; size it has, and that is all. One Gothic window with its exquisite tracery is worth all the meaningless windows of St. Paul's; nay, is worth the whole pile itself. Any one with brains can raise a classic pile; it has been done over and over again, and that most successfully, in this our present day. Not so with Gothic work. Alas! the heads and hands who raised those wonders in stone are now no more, are gone from us for ever, and there are none to succeed them in all this land of ours. Modern Gothic there is of course, and plenty of it, but in it there is no life; it is, judged by comparison, cold and dead, and how could it be otherwise? Great men gave their time and chiselled the meaningless stone into life, and thought it not unworthy to work upon the meanest parts of our old ecclesiastical piles; to them it was a labour of love; they thought not of recompense who

laboured thus. This latter of course they had, but it was not first in their minds. Such artists now work not for our churches or cathedrals, and if they would the present generation would and could not afford to pay them.

After seeing all Cirencester had to show us we returned to our hotel, well pleased with our morning's work, and not altogether sorry the wet day had been the cause of our seeing so much of the town and its belongings, which otherwise we should probably have missed. We paid our horses a visit and found them lying down and resting comfortably in their loose boxes ; and we found also the courtyard full of various kinds of conveyances, and the stables as full of different sorts and conditions of steeds, for we discovered it was market day. Within we found the coffee-room full of farmers—great, burly men, with a wonderful capacity for stowing away huge quantities of roast beef and ale. I never saw, to my knowledge, so many big men together before. Fine specimens of the human race they were, strong of arm and kind of heart—perhaps not quite of the mental type of which great thinkers, engineers, and inventors are made, but the very backbone and life of the nation. Such men well armed and trained would make short work with any foreign foe. A few regiments of them would in a charge by their sheer weight carry all before them. Long life and prosperity to the farmers of England ; they are of the genuine old stock. Health and stamina and sound common sense are theirs. Staunch and loyal to Church and Throne are they, even

as were their forefathers before them, and as may their children for generations still to come be after them!

Oh! driving across country, and that country England, is a pleasant thing indeed; nothing more delightful can be imagined or could heart desire. So at least we thought as upon a gloriously fine morning, the air pleasant and cool after the rain of yesterday, we rattled along the street leading out of Cirencester into the free, fair country roads. How delicious and fresh everything appeared that day; the rain, to use an artist's expression, had brought out the colour of everything. The road was a hilly one and traversed high ground; old walls, covered with lichen, moss, and creeping ivy, now and again gave place to hedgerows, and it was hard to tell which was most beautiful. The sun was shining gloriously overhead, but softly; there was no disagreeable glare of light, and from our elevated position we had an expansive view of the country, and we watched with unabated interest the play of lights and shadows over the same as the wind sent the violet-coloured clouds scudding along the sky and causing us by turns to be in sunshine and shade. The trees were all bending before the summer breezes; the leaves, now all green, and anon all silvery grey and yellowly brown, changing with every breath of wind and play of sunlight. How can I describe that road? It would have driven a painter wild: the magic colour of the old stone walls, of the brackens, green and red and yellow, at their feet, the beauty of the hedgerows, fragrant odours from which, of wild rose, honeysuckle, and sweetbriar,

were wafted to us from time to time; the wonderful wealth of wild flowers, bouquets of which we gathered as we walked along, for it was no day for hurrying on. At one spot we came to a very sudden and nasty descent on the road, a place that might with little labour and expense have been filled and made up level. It was so severe that it caused us to wonder how the coaches of past days went over it day by day without mishap, and still more to wonder how it was possible such a dip (as well as several others we passed from time to time) was ever allowed to exist without even any attempt at improvement. That such was not the state of affairs all over the country Telford's famous roads and easy gradients prove, notably on his Holyhead road, one of the finest in the kingdom, or the world.

It was a lonely country we were travelling through, few habitations or inhabitants were to be seen, and we were beginning to wonder if we had left civilization altogether behind, when suddenly at a turn in the road, some distance ahead, a house came into view, standing out on the crest of a rise darkly and sharply against the light blue sky. Then came a dark wood, and another house to the left, and then a signboard showed us the houses were both hotels, a pleasing discovery, for our horses were in need of a rest. We drove up to the nearest of the two hostelries, when lo! what a surprise was ours. As it were in a moment the land in front of us appeared to drop down, and what a view met our gaze! Search all England through you could not equal it. It was as though a kingdom were spread out before

us, with its cities, towns, and villages, rivers, streams, roads, and railways. To adequately describe such a view would be impossible. It is the finest of its kind I ever beheld, and although possibly it may be equalled (though of this I doubt exceedingly) I am sure it could nowhere be excelled. The whole of our road to Gloucester, some eight miles, could be plainly seen and followed, and beyond the country could be seen for miles, traced out as in a map, till lost in the blue haze of the far distance. We walked in the garden of the hotel and admired the view in silence till a shower drove us indoors, where we discovered the landlord, and who we found, in conversation with him, had bought up the other inn so as to have no opposition. We thought it would have been better for the public had he not done so. He told us people round about for many miles drove here for the view, and sometimes the numbers were so many that both his hotels were filled. He also informed us numerous fossils and shells of the pre-historic age were found about on the heights, proving where we now were had once been the bed of an ocean.

We somewhat dreaded the descent, it appeared to be so sudden and steep. However we managed it in safety, though it required considerable care and nerve driving down the steep sides of the hill. On arriving upon the level we trotted gaily along at a good pace, and soon traversed the eight miles to Gloucester, where we drove up to the good old-fashioned inn, the Bell. It was interesting to notice how naturally these old coaching inns are fitted to

receive travellers by road, the plans of the buildings remaining much the same as in the days gone by.

The entrance to the courtyard and stabling (now in use and request solely on market days, and very busy then) and the side entrance to the hotel enable one to get down in shelter if necessary, and quietly out of the street and bustle of traffic.

It amused us, too, to observe the general look of surprise of the boots, ostler, and others, at having to get the luggage, &c., out of a private carriage, which had evidently made the journey by road, and not by the hotel omnibus or cab from the station as usual. Plainly, travellers by road are scarce and rare individuals in the present day. The Bell had every appearance of being a good old-fashioned and comfortable hostelrie, a place where one might take his ease, and find a home away from home; would there were more such in the world! We felt an unspoken welcome here, as soon as we entered, and knew we should be treated and fare well.

There is no virtue in eating badly cooked food, and when in country and roadside inns we are in doubt as to this matter, we generally order tea and chops or cold meat and eggs, for our evening repast; these one can hardly fail to procure good anywhere. But when we have reason to believe our lines have fallen in pleasant places we indulge in a good dinner. Then it is with keen appetite, and from the infrequency of the same, a really good dinner—well cooked, and washed down with sound wine, not necessarily rare or expensive, light of course, and by choice either hock, claret, or champagne—is a real

luxury, and duly appreciated, and quite a different affair to the endless dinners of town. Here good digestion waits on appetite, and every little luxury is gratefully welcomed; the simplest dishes appear excellent, and the wine too comes fresh and fragrant to the palate.

Gloucester is a pleasant and a cheerful city; here and there, built in the corners and fronts of old houses, as we passed by we noticed quaint heads of men and animals carved in stone, and wonderfully carved too, each one having a different and characteristic expression; evidently spoils in days gone by (possibly in the time of the Commonwealth) from the fine old ecclesiastical edifices of the town.

Next morning we inspected the cathedral. It is a grand specimen of Gothic masonry; and we were fortunate to obtain for our guide an intelligent and civil verger. The interior impressed us more than that of any other similar religious pile, save perhaps Canterbury. The choir is exquisite, the tracery and carving being simply perfect. The eastern window is a marvel of beauty and a wealth of subdued religious light, mellow yet rich and even gorgeous, and yet sombre withal; it is, too, magnificent in size, being the largest in England, and for that matter possibly in the world. We noticed the whispering gallery, and duly admired and appreciated the ingenuity of the ancient builders in adding an eastern chapel without spoiling the light of the fine window. But above all the cloisters pleased us the most, the roof of which is embellished with superb fan tracery, and the windows filled in with rich stained glass, the

case we believe with no other cloisters, at least we have never seen any such. A figure of Robert, Duke of Normandy, eldest son of William the Conqueror, carved in Irish bog-oak and remarkably perfect, we noticed with great interest. It is a wonderful and a strange piece of work, being executed as early as 1134, and is hollow. The Duke is encased in chain-armour, the legs are crossed, and the right hand rests upon the hilt of his sword. We had never seen an effigy carved in wood before, and considering the age of this, and its perfect state of preservation, not chipped here and there as the marble and alabaster statues so frequently are, we could not but wonder if wood had been used in place of stone, whether on the whole it would not have lasted better. Wood will burn of course, but heat will crack and soon destroy marble and stone, and in that respect there is but little to choose between the two.

Gloucester Cathedral, above all others, gave us the impression of wearing an air of grandeur and solemn magnificence—an impression to be felt, but impossible to describe. It is a cathedral that, unlike many others, I might almost say all others, has most fortunately not suffered at the hands of the restorer; it has certainly been restored, but restored in a proper sense, and has benefited thereby. For instance, the rich solemn beauty of the east window, due entirely to its ancient glass, is not marred by mixing modern with the old stained work. This window has been so carefully re-leaded, and with such reverence for the old glass, that no new glass has been

allowed to be introduced, and any deficiency has been simply repaired with plain glass, so that this window is now a most complete example of the ancient art.

Among the many advantages of travelling by road, none are more apparent than the natural way you approach and leave the towns and villages on your route; they are prepared to meet and receive you, and you enter them the proper way, and, as it were, by the front door. How different is it by railway, where you invariably sneak—I can use no other expression—into towns and out again, by back ways and through back slums. You know nothing of the town through which you pass, and it cares as little about you, or its appearance to the railway traveller. Drive through any English town, take for instance Gloucester or Chester or Shrewsbury. How beautiful and interesting they are; a simple drive through any one, and you cannot help observing the character of the place, you know something of it, you have an impression of the spot to take away with you. By railway you know simply nothing at all; you have no more idea of what, say Exeter or York or Derby are like, than what the North Pole or any other town you have never seen resembles. Let others travel by train who will, and those who are compelled to, but for pleasure give me the roads, the grand old roads of beautiful England! A summer's day, a pretty country—and that is to be had almost everywhere in England, away from the large cities and towns—a pair of willing horses, an agreeable and sympathetic companion, and how pleasantly and joyously the hours pass away!

CHAPTER IV.

Newnham—An Old Sword—A Stormy Drive—Blakeney—Lidney—A Deserted Inn—Chepstow Town and Castle—The Windcliff—An Old Wall—A Quaint Staircase—Tintern Abbey—Railways and Scenery—What the Landlord said.

It was late in the afternoon before we resumed our journey. Gloucester was such a pleasant city, and our rooms at the Bell were so comfortable, and we were so well cared for, that we were loth to leave such agreeable quarters.

We arranged only to make a short stage on account of the time. According to our road book we found some twelve miles or so would take us to Newnham, and so we determined to make this our night's destination, especially as we had learnt from the ostler that there was a very fair hotel there and capital accommodation for horses, this latter being to us an important item. The morning had been wet, and we drove into a mass of yellow light; the sunset did not promise well for the morrow, but the beauty of the moment was undeniable. We had a golden sky before us, and the wet leaves and roads, river and everything more or less reflected the same. It was a rich country through which we were travelling—a wonderfully rich country. Cattle were peacefully browsing in the deep green pastures; there were fruitful orchards and fine trees, cosy-looking

cottages with luxuriant gardens, and farmhouses with evident signs of prosperity, all of which gave one a pleasing impression of peace, plenty, and contentment. But, oh! the beauty of that road; how shall I describe it? We were driving through a fairy land; the river to the left, the road, the trees, all reflected the tinge of the sky. The horses' hoofs trod in, and the wheels splashed through pools of gold! The shadows cast were everywhere of a delicate purple grey. The broad stream was shining from between overhanging trees of elm and beech, and birch and oak, all of which were masses of brightest yellow in light, and a pearly green grey in shadow. The colour everywhere was wonderful. The country was like a pebble, which when wet shows all its beauty.

We drove on in silence; how could we speak amid so much loveliness? It was as though we were traversing some fairy or enchanted land; so unlike was it to the real everyday life, one could hardly realize that it was a fact and not a dream. So did we enjoy the rare beauty of that evening, that we arrived at the end of our stage before we imagined we were more than half-way there. Yes, yonder, ahead of us stood Newnham Church, a dark mass of grey against the luminous evening sky, situated high up upon a bold promontory overlooking the Severn.

It would not have required a great mental strain to have imagined ourselves some centuries back, and approaching a mediæval stronghold; the old church tower appearing in the dim uncertain light,

in its commanding position, more like the keep of some old feudal castle than a peaceful religious edifice. But it was late, and there was no time for romancing. We drove quickly on and were soon in the little town, and rattled along its one straggling street to an ancient-looking hotel with the modern title of Victoria. We discovered, in spite of its name, we had arrived at a very old-fashioned inn; we had real tapestry and old oak in our sitting-room—luxurious and lucky mortals that we were—and the landlady's daughter pointed out to me with evident pride, seeing I took an interest in the old house, a bit of quaint and curious old stained glass in the staircase window, the ancient Latin inscription of which I could not make much of. Newnham we found to be an interesting little town, grandly situated on a bank overlooking the Severn. From its elevated position the view from the churchyard is very fine. Inside the church a most quaint and curious old Anglo-Norman font, with carved figures of the Twelve Apostles, interested us. There is, too, to be seen in the town an old sword of office presented to the corporation by King John; it is in perfect preservation, excepting that the handle is now a wooden one.

It was a weird, wild morning the one on which we left Newnham. After having finished our inspection of the town and its surroundings we ordered the horses to be put to, though not without considerable misgivings as to whether or not we should have a wet and stormy drive, for though as yet it had not actually rained, the lowering clouds and

masses of vapour came sweeping by and overhead in a very threatening manner. There was a delicious south-west wind blowing, and the barometer was steady, so we determined to proceed, but carefully prepared for storms. How different now was everything from the night before! then all was so peaceful and full of such wonderful colouring, now all was storm and warlike, and was everywhere of a dull grey colour. The Severn, overnight all glittering gold, was now of a cheerless leaden hue, and the mists swept hurriedly along, blending mountains, hills, and woods into one mass of sombre grey. There was plenty of movement in the picture, the clouds and mists travelled apace, and the trees bent with many sighs and murmurings to the wind. There were waves on the Severn, and land waves along the seas of grass on shore. Our destination for this evening was Chepstow, where we had every prospect of arriving well drenched. However, it mattered little to us whether it rained or not, somehow we were just as happy either way. Wet weather gave us glorious effects, and often our jolliest drives were in pouring rain, that ought most successfully to have damped our spirits were such possible. But driving thus and living out so much in the open air, we felt so dreadfully well, and so thoroughly enjoyed life and everything, that even a good drenching now and again only made us, as it were, more recklessly merry than ever.

It might storm and rain as it would, our waterproofs and wraps kept us dry, and we had plenty of sunny memories wherewith to keep our hearts warm

and contented. Change is a pleasant thing let who will say nay. If you live in a beautiful country of mountains and lakes, and woods and rocky rivers, a change to a flat (uninteresting if you will) land makes you appreciate the more the good things you have at home. And so gloom and rain causes you to enjoy the bright, cheery sunshine all the more; besides, one would be very apt to get wearied with changeless sun and glare; at least I found such to be the case when travelling in California, the land of sun. What would I not have given when there for some of our despised clouds and mists! For myself I thoroughly appreciate and enter fully into the feelings of a certain British captain of a Transatlantic liner, who while approaching the shores of old England came across a regular day of mists and clouds, and addressing a Yankee who was bitterly complaining of the weather, exclaimed, while rubbing his hands together in glee, 'Now this is what I like; none of your d——d everlasting sun for me.' A drive on a wet day, when the clouds are travelling quickly by, and the mists are wandering amongst the hills and woods, and anon a gleam of light gives those wonderful effects, to be only seen on such days, is not a thing to be despised, provided always—and here the rub lies—you are properly prepared for the weather.

And so it was with us. We started upon as unpromising a day as it was possible to conceive; it appeared as though every moment the clouds would pour their contents relentlessly upon us, and yet I

doubt much if we enjoyed any day's drive more than this. Soon after leaving Newnham we had a taste of the quality of the weather, it was a heavy downpour, it came upon us suddenly, and ceased as suddenly; miniature cascades were falling from our aprons and waterproofs on each side of the carriage, and then we had, for a change, a good sample of Scotch mist or drizzle, with now and again a heavy pelter. How to describe the first stage of our drive to Lidney I know not. It is true we could see but little, very little of the country, but what little we could make out appeared surpassingly beautiful. The mists clung around the wooded heights or hills to our left (we were skirting the Forest of Dean), and wonderfully charming did the country appear; now and again they partially cleared away or were driven about by the winds, disclosing cliffs, hills, and woods in delightful confusion. Here and there a clearance would show, in a dim mysterious manner, what appeared to be the remains of an old feudal keep on a projecting rock, and here a ruin and there a quaint old many-gabled house, but before we had time to view the same aright, the envious mists would gather round and all was hidden from our sight. Possibly in the garish light of a fine day all this would have appeared very different, and quite probably somewhat prosaic and commonplace. The old feudal keep might possibly have turned out to be nothing more than a disused lime-kiln, or some other equally uninteresting outbuilding, and so forth; but, thanks to the rain and mist, all was uncertain and mysterious, and we appeared

to be travelling through an enchantingly romantic country.

We arrived in due course at the village of Blakeney very jolly, and outside very wet; we hesitated if we should rest here, but not deeming the appearance of the inn altogether satisfactory, we proceeded on our way. We descended into the village, and crossed a brawling stream; it appeared a charming spot, as far as the surroundings went, and the place itself was quaint and had a delightful old-fashioned look. We had a stiff ascent out of here, and at the top of the hill by a signpost we stopped to see what the weather would bring forth, for it looked so exceedingly black and threatening ahead, that we nearly made up our minds to retreat back to the despised inn. One large dark cloud came hurrying along, like a huge balloon, and almost touched the top of the signpost. We watched it with anxious curiosity; we felt we could almost touch it; it oppressed us, and appeared as though it would crush or smother us altogether. But it passed harmlessly by, and some one else had the benefit of the aqueous vapour. This ominous cloud safely away, we took heart of grace and plunged into a confused mass of mists and mountains. We could trace the road a short distance ahead, and that was all, and so we proceeded, fighting our way against the war of the elements, till we came to Lidney. Here we descended into the town by a pretty road with luxuriant overhanging trees, which sheltered us considerably from the very heavy downpour, for it was now raining in earnest again. We

drove rapidly along the one straggling street of the place, looking out on each side for an inn which never appeared, till we had almost given up all hopes of there being one at all; and it was not till we had arrived at the extreme end of the town that we came upon one; and it did not promise well when we did so, judging from outside appearances. It was a long, large, ugly barrack-like looking building. However, we drove into the courtyard, a spacious one, with evident signs of business being done; here being a farmer's gig, and there a carrier's cart, and away in a far-off corner a pony-carriage and other nondescript conveyances, evidently all putting up here, and many doors round about promised plenty of stable room. So far so good.

But it was with great difficulty any ostler could be discovered. After much shouting, with no result, the happy thought struck us of sounding the horn, which as usual had the desired effect, and the ostler at last made his appearance. I suppose, like others of his class, he was used to much shouting, and was probably enjoying some refreshment, and as country people are as a rule not in dreadful haste, he was in no hurry to respond. But the sound of the horn was an unaccustomed sound to him, and perhaps curiosity, or other motives less worthy, induced him to hasten his appearance. Perchance the horn gave him visions of a drag and four horses and double fees; if so he was doomed to sudden disappointment. However that may be, he proved when we did get hold of him a very obliging and civil fellow; slow certainly, but sure. Having seen our steeds

comfortably quartered, we went into the hotel on a foraging expedition on our own account.

It was a strange, sleepy, deserted sort of a place that inn at Lidney, at least on the day we were there we found it so. We entered and found no one anywhere about; we went up to the bar with like result; we rang two bells we discovered, one marked 'Chambermaid' and one 'Boots,' in the hopes of arousing one or the other of these domestics, but neither appeared; then we shouted 'Waiter! waiter!' but no one was forthcoming. In despair, we almost thought of going for the magic horn, and seeing what that would bring forth, and testing it, as to whether it would be equally efficacious indoors as out, when we espied a door open at the far end of a long corridor, and which appeared to lead to a sitting-room of some sort; this we entered, and finding it to be a comfortable place made ourselves at home, and rang the bell there. At last it was answered, by a cheery, bright waitress, who made many and wonderful excuses for there being no one about, and asked us what we would like to have.

We were very hungry and would have been glad of anything, and from the appearance of the place we quite concluded if we could obtain bread and cheese and ale, or perchance ham and eggs, we might consider ourselves fortunate. When, therefore, we were asked what we should like for luncheon, we were somewhat surprised. We inquired what we could have, and it ended in a capital meal being served. Certainly one cannot always judge by appearances; who would expect a cocoa-

nut to contain milk, judging simply by the outside, without previous knowledge ?

Whilst we had been taking our ease in our inn a wonderful change had been going on outside. The sun was now shining gloriously forth, and ahead, where our road lay, there was hardly a cloud to be seen ; but in the direction from which we had travelled all was blackness and confusion. The contrast was great indeed, and lo ! as we looked, suddenly, a magnificent double rainbow sent its glory across the gloom. It was a pleasant change to be able to continue our journey in the bright warm sunshine. We arrived in due course at Chepstow, on approaching which we had a long and steep descent into the town. We crossed the river Wye here on a low bridge, from which looking up we had a grand view of Brunel's magnificent viaduct for the railway high over head. We found Chepstow to be a quaint old town, with a delightful inn of the olden time, the Beaufort Arms to wit, kept by a charming landlady, quite a dame of the ancient school, all of which we duly appreciated. The castle we easily discovered, grandly situated on a steep rock overlooking the tidal river Wye. The entrance is fine, if not impressive, the ancient gates are still in existence, within one of which is the original wicket. We passed under the portcullis and entered the courtyard of the castle, which somehow did not impress us as such ruins generally do. Why, it would be difficult to explain. The ruins are undoubtedly fine, the situation grand ; but with the notable exceptions of the entrance gateway and

flanking towers they disappointed us. It might be, probably it was, the fault lay within ourselves; still, be the cause what it may, Chepstow Castle is the only ruin of the kind that did not equal, or rather fell short of, our expectations.

We were in high spirits the morning we left Chepstow, for were we not that day commencing a tour of the lovely Wye, intending to follow that beautiful river, so famed in song and story, to its source in the lone Plynlimmon mountains far away in distant Wales? Were we not, too, on that especial day on a pilgrimage to the fair abbey of Tintern? The sun was shining brightly forth, and the clouds were of the lightest and finest summer kind, giving us promise of a glorious day. The rain of yesterday had sufficiently cooled the air, and allayed all suspicion of dust, and generally nature was looking as bright and fresh as possible. The first mile or two out of Chepstow are not particularly interesting, or perhaps rather we did not appreciate them as we should, knowing how much of the beautiful and romantic was in store for us farther on our way. A turn to the right at St. Arvans, a plain village with a pretty name, and the scenery changed at once; shady trees overhung the road, and suddenly, as it were, we came upon the famed and romantic Windcliff. And how can I describe the glory of the scene that burst upon our view? The road wound round a high beetling cliff to the left, while to the right, far below, was the silvery Wye issuing from a wooded glen. The hillsides were covered with a profusion of trees of all sorts, the foliage of which

was of a wonderful variety of colouring, while here and there grey rocks peeped forth festooned with ivy. The road was bounded by a glorious old wall, ages old, the stones of which were weathered into lovely contrasting tints of warm and cold greys, and covered with various mosses, yellow lichen, stonecrop, and ferns of many kinds. There was nothing but what was beautiful and lovely for the eye to gaze upon. The sun, too, glinting down upon the whole made the scene doubly perfect. Here and there long steps of stone projected from the sides of the wall, so left ages ago, when the old wall was young. These in days gone by have no doubt been trodden by pilgrim and lover, priest and shepherd, monk and footsore wayfarer, who have wandered along and adown the shady footpaths leading from them to the venerable monastery itself.

A short distance farther a turn in the road, and there lay the fair abbey of Tintern before us, picturesquely situated at a bend of the Wye, enclosed in a mountain-girt and wooded valley. We involuntarily stopped to admire the wonderful scene. The landscape was all in mellow shade, but a bright gleam of sunshine rested lovingly on the grand old pile, giving it a rich glory of warm colouring—a sort of halo! How entrancing was the scene! It appeared more like an artist's dream than stern reality. Were all reality as such, what a delicious world this would be to live in!

We drove direct to the ruins and inspected them. These old abbeys have a peculiar charm for me. How oft were their solitary cloisters (all

deserted now) trod by the solemn monks of old! how often here, in great dignity, came cardinal and bishop! Here dwelt the worthy abbots, whose influence was at one time almost all-powerful, their persons and wishes being sacred in the eyes of the untaught world. These glorious edifices, splendid in their ruin, speak plainly of the greatness of the artistic and poetical genius of their builders. They are indeed 'the fragments of a glorious Gothic poem.'

The greensward now covers the chancel floor up to the very high altar, now decayed and overgrown with moss and ivy, and almost hides with its luxuriant growth the tombs of the great who lie buried within the abbey's once sacred walls. Ivy and moss, too, cover the exquisitely chiselled carvings of old, and have made the ruins their home. No more through storied lattices will the softened sunlight stream, through windows of a hundred tints, warming with its rich gathered colouring the glorious Gothic shrine, lighting up the dark niches and monuments of the once triumphant pile.

> I do love these ancient ruins ;
> We never tread upon them, but we set
> Our foot upon some reverend history ;
> And questionless here in this open court,
> Which now lies naked to the injuries
> Of stormy weather, some lie interr'd,
> Loved the church so well, and gave so largely to 't,
> They thought it should have canopied their bones
> Till doomsday—but all things have their end.

And so the old abbeys have passed for ever away, the cowl and the cloister are things of the past, gone

to their long rest have abbot and monk, and the worshipper who knelt at their shrine; their tombs have been defaced or disappeared, but the sacred ruin still stands mourning over them in its solitude. Whatever one's creed or clime may be, the heart must be cold indeed that can enter their portals unaffected by pity or awe.

We made our quarters at Tintern in a small and delightfully picturesque old inn with a garden, just overlooking the ruins. A stone staircase outside led to the upper rooms, giving a most original and quaint look to the building: there was as well, in case of wet and cold, an inner and more modern staircase. We preferred and used the outer one, as well for pleasure as novelty. The landlord told us Americans were always 'much taken' with the strange arrangement. It appears that large numbers of our Transatlantic cousins visit this spot. Ah well! they might travel the world over and not find another to compare to it. The view from the hotel garden is very fine and perfect, perhaps the best general view of the abbey possible, and we lingered long there, fondly gazing on the scene. Roofed now solely with the blue of heaven, with architecture scarcely defaced by time, the destruction worked by man gracefully hidden by nature's matchless hand, surely no ruin has been more lovingly and tenderly treated on this mother earth.

In the evening we strolled about the pleasant garden of the hotel—would all country inns had such gardens—and chatted with the landlord, who was attending to his plants and flowers; we took a lesson

in gardening at the same time, and learnt his views of things in general and Tintern in particular. He said the railway had spoilt the place, it brought a lot of trippers down, and though they might bring him some custom and profit, he would rather be without them—worthy landlord! Certainly their unseemly behaviour and noisy merriment jars somewhat upon one's feelings in such a place. We were fortunate in our visit, for ''Arry' and his comrades in arms were conspicuous by their absence, much to our gratification and peaceful enjoyment.

It certainly does seem a pity that the iron monster has not spared some few of England's beauty spots. What business has a railway trespassing along Wye's romantic and entrancing valley? Utility is all very well, but beauty is a good thing also. It is to be hoped that the many gems of home scenery still left undefaced may not be encroached upon and sacrificed to the greed of speculators and others.

We retired late that night, so late that the moon had risen, and we were fortunate indeed to have her, for she afforded us the great and unexpected treat of a fresh and most poetical view of the old abbey. Through our lattice window, in the dim mystic even-light, we saw the walls of the old monastic fane all silvered o'er by her soft mellow light.

CHAPTER V.

Farewell to Tintern—Up the Valley of the Wye—Monmouth—A Ghostly Room—Raglan Castle—Abergavenny—Sugarloaf Mountain—Crickhowell—Curious Old Stone—Enter Wales—Caught in a Storm amongst the Mountains—Brecon—An Angler's Headquarters—Losing Our Way—Builth—Our Horn Stolen—Mineral Springs—An Old Harper—How Llewelyn Died.

THE phaeton was at the inn door early in the morning, our horses were pawing the ground anxious for the start—little they heeded the scenery, forsooth—but we were in no such haste to proceed. The view of the old abbey from where we were was so perfect, we could not but rest and gaze upon it, lost in admiration; but we had not time to linger long, attractive as the spot was. Just one last look back, one farewell glance. It was a scene for a pilgrim. The lovely ruin, with its clustered pillars, with their ornaments of ivy, and mullioned windows, was bathed in a solemn glory by the morning sun, which, conquering the mist, streamed through broken oriel and ornate aisle on to the rich velvety grass-grown floor of the old monastic fane!

The deserted choir—no, not deserted now, rooks had taken the place of the cowled monks, and were holding profane mattins in the once sacred cloisters.

Farewell Tintern!—long, long ago, when in thy glory, how often must the weary pilgrim have been

cheered by the sound of thy bells and the chanting of thy monks. But these have become things of the past; now

> No bells are ringing,—no monks are singing,
> When the moonlight falls around.

From Tintern to Monmouth we drove up and along the narrow valley of the Wye, as fair a valley as earth can show or man's heart desire; rock, wood, hill, and river all combine to make a perfect scene. From a bridge we crossed about half-way on our road we had a view up and down of the lovely river, hurrying on through the bright sunshine to join the summer sea, a view not so much to be described as to be remembered. The road was for miles pleasantly shaded by overhanging trees (forming for us quite a green arcade) of birch and mountain ash, winding along the sides of lofty wooded hills, with the river on the other hand for company. Here and there we saw where the spider had woven his web from tree to tree, dewdrops all glistening in the sun, like rarest opals, a glory of crimson and gold. What a wealth of beauty is there not in the common things around us, could we only perceive it? There were but few signs of life the whole way. Now and then a startled rabbit would scamper across our path, and from the deep recesses of the forest a woodman's axe was ringing, and the note of the yellow-hammer and wren we heard now and again, and that was all. No other signs of life we saw till emerging out of the valley we came upon a railway bridge, with an engine busily and not noiselessly shunting; back-

wards and forwards it went, whistling the while. Whether all such whistling was necessary or whether purposely done I know not; but we had some trouble with the horses going under the bridge, and the engine-driver looked down and appeared to enjoy the sight of the prancing steeds.

Monmouth is a most perfectly and beautifully situated town; the approach to it is very pleasing, but the place itself is disappointing somewhat. The town, though clean and neat, is scarcely equal to its situation. Nature has done much for Monmouth, but Monmouth does not appear to have done much for itself. However, perhaps the town's good qualities do not consist in outward show; anyway, though externally by no means prepossessing, we found internally the hotel and accommodation was all we could wish.

The road from Monmouth to Raglan may best be described as one of quiet rural beauty, the distant peeps of dark blue mountains adding greatly to the picturesqueness of the country. At Raglan we found a large hotel, at least large for the size of the village, a relic of the old coaching times no doubt. Our bedroom here had a weird, uncanny sort of look, a look difficult to describe, but for all that a very real one. It was a cheerless room, with ancient furniture—a four-poster of course—and an unused, unhabitable appearance; altogether giving one the idea of existing not in the present, but in ages long ago. The floor gave forth an unpleasant resounding sound when we trod upon it, and somehow our voices were echoed solemnly whenever we spoke.

It was a room we felt that thoroughly deserved to have a ghost, it had such a regular haunted look—and it depressed us. We were in no haste to retire that night; we found or invented excuses for sitting up late. We did not sleep as soundly as usual, for as fortune would have it (some one I suppose must have been ill) we were disturbed from time to time by deep hollow groans; the place, the hour, the room all helped to make us somewhat nervous, and I verily believe if a real ghost had walked in we should not have been much surprised. We were both glad when morning came, but even the bright sunlight did not lift the gloom from off that room. It was Sunday, and like good people we walked in the morning to the village church. Long, long was the good man's sermon, but we wearied not, for were we not sitting hard by the quaint old porch, and did we not get glorious glimpses of the far-off sunlit country? After service we found our way to the castle. As Tintern is perhaps the most beautiful of abbeys, so Raglan is a prince amongst old castles. A stately grand old pile it is. These edifices belong to the pleistocene period of architecture. Huge, overawing, terrible in their day; but now as harmless and dead for good or evil as are the dreadful monsters of the pre-historic age. Raglan Castle is certainly the most picturesque ruin of any old stronghold I know. We could not but admire the genius of the architect who planned it; colossal strength, proportion and beauty combined, mansion and palace and fortress in one. We rambled leisurely over the ruins; the grass was long and wet, but little we heeded the dampness.

Here we stood amongst old historic ruins, maintaining in their decay an air of solemn grandeur. Some idea of the former magnificence of this old fortress may be gathered from the fact that the walls enclose upwards of four acres. The entrance to the castle is between two massive towers, of solid and substantial build, and which still appear able to weather the storms of centuries, when many of the buildings now existing or to be erected will doubtless be no more. Some of the decorations, in the shape of grotesque faces and sculptured ornaments, in delicate and elaborate chisel-work, still remain, showing that though strength was the chief idea, yet after that was satisfied, decorative and ornamental work was sought after, and that those who raised these stern old edifices could do other and finer work as well. In the construction of ancient castles very much had naturally to be sacrificed to military necessities, yet proportion and effect were not altogether neglected, and I know of no class of buildings, ancient or modern, to equal them in simple picturesque grandeur. Very dear are they to both artist and poet. Perhaps time may have something to do with their beauty; certainly theirs is the incomparable gift of age. This has softened all their harsher features down, has mellowed them as it were, has stained their stones with an indescribable bloom, a mysterious tint of wondrous beauty, helped here and there by many coloured mosses, and the rich subdued green of creeping ivy. If you doubt this, try and paint a single side of yonder flanking tower, and you will find how wonderfully blended are the varying greys,

how full of a hidden wealth of colour; nay, try and accurately copy just one square yard, and tell me if there is a painter in all the world like Time?

One thing puzzled us not a little; we noticed that the fine old keep was outside the walls, instead of being about the centre of the castle, as is usually the case. Of course the fortress was attacked from the side furthermost away from the same, and where the keep was powerless to assist in the defence. The architect who planned such a pile as Raglan must have had good reasons for everything he did, but the position of the keep will be to me, I fear for ever, an unsolved and unsolvable mystery.

We could not stand another night of the ghostly room, haunted or not, and so we elected to start for Abergavenny late in the afternoon. I must here give one word of praise to our excellent landlady for the manner in which she cooked and sent up our capital dinner; it was in every respect perfect, and this was only a village inn! I have had worse at a crack London club. Would English cooking were all such as this. Excellence in this respect is, alas for John Bull, not the rule but the exception.

As the phaeton drove up to the door the landlord and landlady both came forward to wish us good-bye and a pleasant journey, in which they appeared to take much interest. This is a delightful old fashion, and gives you the feeling of being more of a departing and regretted guest, than a mere wayfarer paying for his lodging. The worthy landlady presented us, too, with a most beautiful bouquet of Maréchal Niel roses.

A short and pleasant drive of some nine miles brought us to Abergavenny, situated at the foot of the curious Sugarloaf Mountain. The Angel Hotel received us here; new people had only just taken possession of the place, and, there was consequently a good deal of confusion, but everything was beautifully clean, and we were well entertained in spite of the bustle. Abergavenny is a bright little town, pleasantly situated, and, above all things for a country town, not dull; it has good shops, traffic in the streets, and presents, or certainly did to us, quite a lively if not a gay appearance. Our opinion was of course arrived at after much country journeyings; probably had we come by train direct from London we should have seen the place through a different pair of spectacles.

The next morning being fine encouraged an early start, for we were now amongst grand scenery, and wished for plenty of time to enable us to linger on the way, and have time to enjoy the same. The landlord here, too, came to wish us good-day and a prosperous journey. These little attentions, which cost nothing, are very pleasing to the traveller, they are a something which cannot be bought and paid for, and are always most pleasing recollections of a journey. They make him feel he is a somebody, a human being with feelings and sentiments, not a mere number, as alas! is now but too frequently the case with our modern gigantic hotels, much to be avoided.

Our first stage was to Crickhowell, a pretty village in spite of its name, and our way was along

as lovely a road as the three kingdoms can anywhere show, one side overhung with graceful birch and other trees, with a background of solemn pines, the other was a bright, joyous, gladsome river. There was a pleasant breeze, and the zephyrs journeying made sweet cadence along the green arcade, and the sun-rays twinkled through the countless leaves overhead ; it was like driving through an endless Gothic aisle. Some few miles on the way we passed a very ancient and curious old stone, placed here ages ago to mark the boundary between England and Wales. The stone, though green with age, showed still plainly upon its face two heads looking in different directions. We could not find or hear of any history respecting this stone, save that long, long ago it had been placed to mark the boundary between the two countries. No doubt it had a history, and probably a very interesting one, could it only be discovered or unearthed. Crickhowell, the first Welsh village we entered, gave us a very favourable impression, being well built and having a cared-for kind of a look, as unlike as possible to the plain unkempt villages we afterwards became so well acquainted with in the bleaker mountain regions. We found a cheerful inn here with moderate fare, though we did not consider the charges as moderate. From Crickhowell we entered upon a lonely but rich and sheltered valley, apparently shut in on all sides, except the one we came from, by high bleak mountains, forming a strong contrast to the fat green pastures of the vale. We appeared to be driving right into the mountains, and it was a puzzle to us

where the road could possibly go to, or how we were to get out of the place; when lo! a sudden turn to the right, unperceived till we came to the spot, and our road was plainly marked, mounting the steep hillside. It was mounting and no mistake; to save the horses and for our own pleasure we dismounted, and climbed. We rested now and again, and lingered from time to time to admire the glorious view we had in the direction in which we had been travelling. At last we reached the top of the pass, and just at the moment a few heavy drops of rain fell, and we prepared for stormy weather.

There was an ominous silence in the air, a reflection of subdued light was everywhere, a long streak of yellow sheen was in the horizon before us, and overhead were dark purple lowering clouds. These latter came down in hail and rain between us and the sun. We had a golden shower; we knew and felt the sunshine was in front of us, and we drove through the hail and the rain into a glory of light. The effect was magnificent, it was worth the whole drive for that five minutes of weird beauty. But the hail and cold rain were very real; the former beat on the ground so hard that it rebounded with considerable force, it stung the horses and half-blinded us and them for the time. High as we were on the mountain side the cold was intense, and it was difficult driving; the horses were restless, and it was some time after the storm before they quite recovered their equanimity. The sky quickly cleared again for a time, but dark heavy clouds were collecting round the mountain tops, so we hurried on

our way, the water of the storm still pouring off our waterproofs and aprons in small streams on either side of the carriage. It was a glorious drive; we were plunging into a wilderness of mountains, along their sides the wind was driving clouds of mist and rain, and now and again a gleam of sunlight would alight on their hoary weather-beaten sides, showing plainly here and there the many scars of time, and countless leaping, plunging streams. We looked down on all this wild wilderness of cloud and mountains, of water, wind, and sky. What a subject it would make, we thought, for a picture. If only Turner were alive and could have seen and painted it! 'The March of a Mountain Storm' would have been a fitting and a proper title. For so it was, and from our height we could watch the battle of the elements, even as a general could watch the clash of contending armies.

How sturdily stood the grand old mountains amidst the tumult, giving to one the feeling of security and strength.

Brecon Beacon, the highest point, we caught a sudden glance of now and again, as the hurrying clouds left its summit clear for a moment or two and no longer—towering proudly over all. We drove rapidly on; having descended into lower ground we made good way, the wheels sloughing through the soft wet road, and throwing the mud up in the most liberal manner.

In due course we reached the outskirts of Brecon, and rattled through the long street of the town apace. A turn in the road, and oh! what a

contrast from the dull, uninteresting street. And this is what we saw. An old stone bridge, moss and ivy covered, with a cascade, or rather cascades, of water tumbling and foaming amongst dark grey rocks, some fishermen with their rods and creels leaning on the rampart in picturesque costumes, an old shepherd resting with his collie dog ; a wooded hill on one side, and on the other a quaint long, low old-fashioned hotel, with more fishermen around the porch ; close by the ivy-clad ruins of an old castle, and beyond all the wild cloud-capt mountains for a background ! The picture was complete and romantic in the extreme.

We fared well at the castle inn, and soon found we were at the headquarters of the fishing fraternity. We met no one here but the followers of the gentle art ; the hall of the hotel was full of rods, landing nets, creels, and various other necessaries, or supposed necessaries, for the capture of the finny tribe. We had fish, excellent, most excellent, sweet and freshly caught trout for dinner, for supper, for breakfast ; you can have enough even of a good thing, at least we found it so.

The talk at the table was of fish and fishing, and of nothing else ; in fact you were quite looked down upon, you were a nobody unless you talked of the sport. I am not what is understood as an enthusiastic fisherman, though I have whipped many miles of water in my time, but I have a great liking, amounting almost to respect, for the disciples of Izaak Walton ; they are eminently entertaining and good-natured, they have a decided love and predi-

lection for the country and country life, and bring a feeling of out-door fresh country air into all their conversations and stories, probable and improbable, true and exaggerated.

No sooner had we arrived and got the horses comfortably settled, than down came the rain. We consulted the barometer and found it had fallen, and that somewhat depressed our spirits, for the outlook for the morrow was anything but reassuring. However, the anglers aforesaid were in the best of spirits, the weather suited their sport, and little they heeded the wet, for were they not dressed purposely to resist the same, and did they not wade and revel for hours in the rivers and streams around? And I thought, as I made the acquaintance of a banker's clerk who had just come down here for a few days' holiday, and was looking as jolly as possible, all decked out in waterproofs, &c., that fishermen have much to be thankful for; bad weather does not mar their sport or make them miserable—not a bit of it, they glory in the rain and stormy weather.

Fancy any other young man from town coming down into the country for a week's holiday, and enjoying his first day in a deluge of rain, with a steady south-west wind and an equally steadily falling barometer! I wonder what an ordinary man's feelings would be under such circumstances; I trow he would not have such a light heart as my angler.

In the evening we sat and chatted over our pipes and cigars and accompanying glasses of toddy, that is the fishermen and I—I, humbug that I was,

pretending to be one of the fraternity—and a very jolly evening we had. Capital company were my companions, and many a good anecdote and story were told, I making a good listener, and being well rewarded for my pains. An angler is certainly a happy man; good sport, bad sport, or no sport at all, it little matters to him; he appears, whatever the fates or luck may ordain to him, to enjoy life thoroughly, and what more can man wish?

The next morning broke hopelessly wet, the barometer was lower than ever—it could not have fallen much lower without going right round to set-fair. So we determined to rest a day here and make a virtue of a necessity, and we might have been worse off, for had we not good company, and from the hotel windows a grand view of the Brecon mountains, with the wonderful effects of mists and rain and clouds and storms? In the evening we had a magnificent rainbow, which cheered our hearts with better prospects for the morrow. But when the morrow came it rained still; however the clouds were higher, and now and again the top peak of the Brecon Beacon was visible and clear. So, making all snug and weather proof, we started in the wet.

Fortune favours the brave. We had not driven far when the clouds suddenly lifted, the sun peeped cautiously out, and the rain ceased. We were bound for Builth, a bleak town in the midst of still bleaker mountains. A few miles from Brecon we had to come to a standstill, to consult our maps and road-books, for we had lost our way, owing to the difficulty in reading our charts and steering our

steeds in the rain. We were in a desolate part, bad roads and no inhabitants or signs of life. We held an anxious consultation; there were many roads branching forth in as many different directions, some no doubt leading to bleak moorland farms, some to quarries, and others to nowhere in particular. After due deliberation we decided to descend into the valley, as the safest course to pursue, the roads leading upwards no doubt ending in the mountains, and gradually emerging into wasteless tracks.

We duly descended and struck in the direction of a village we espied from our elevated position, and which appeared from our maps to be called Llyswen. We arrived here in due course, and found ourselves, as we had hoped and expected, on the main road to Builth. We looked, but could discover no inn in the place where we could rest either ourselves or our horses; so we were obliged to continue on our way.

We were now again by Wye's fair stream, fairer here than ever. Some few miles before Builth we discovered a little unpretending roadside inn, at which we pulled up and gave the horses some ale, the only kind of bait we could obtain for them. While they rested we chatted with the cheery landlady, who would have us go into and through her well-kept and tidy house, and down to the river along a pretty little garden. We duly admired everything and praised her neatness, &c., and departed on our way well pleased. We tasted the ale here and found it excellent. From this little inn to

within half a mile of Builth, all alongside the Wye —which here was a narrow stream tumbling and gambolling from rock to rock—the scenery was impressively beautiful. We suddenly emerged from out of the valley and its sylvan wealth into the bleak and bracing moorland that surrounds the little town of Builth. We found here what we hardly expected—a capital inn, with an old Welsh harper in the hall, playing weird airs of the long ago. The accommodation for the horses was excellent also, but as the ostler and the landlord as well were away with some otter hounds, we had a difficulty in procuring all we required. However, I hunted about whilst my man got the horses out, and eventually we found forage, &c., and soon had our steeds comfortably settled in good quarters ; we could not, however, open the carriage-house, and so had to leave the phaeton in the inn yard. There whilst our man was away our horn was stolen ; a vexing matter, as it was the first thing I had lost during several hundred miles of driving excursions all over England and Wales.

We found a very interesting old church and churchyard, with many curious ancient monuments, just outside the town, and about a mile and a half from the same we discovered also some three powerful mineral springs ; one a chalybeate, one a saline, and the other sulphureous, deserving to be better known and appreciated. Some day, perhaps, Builth may become a noted place for invalids—a Welsh Harrogate, who can tell ?

The harper with his sadly mournful airs gave a

picturesque and romantic feeling to the old inn; he had disappeared in the morning when we left. On leaving here we crossed the Wye on the Bridge of Builth, a fine old stone structure. It was on this spot the gallant Llewelyn, the last prince of Wales, made his final stand against the English; he placed his men to hold the river and the bridge, but they were vanquished. It was winter, and the snow was on the ground, and to baffle pursuit the unfortunate prince employed a blacksmith to reverse his horse's shoes; the smith turned traitor and betrayed Llewelyn's secret, and he was pursued and slain. A farmhouse now marks the spot where his body was buried.

CHAPTER VI.

A Desolate Road—Rhayader—A Wild Drive—A Moorland Village—Primitive Quarters—The Rector and his Church—A Deserted Railway—A Lonely Pass—Plynlimmon—Source of the Wye—A Dangerous Ford—The Devil's Bridge and Falls—A Mighty Ravine—A Mountainous Road—Aberystwith and its surroundings—A Glorious Evening.

Our road out of Builth was at first somewhat tame, or perhaps rather it appeared so to us, after the comparatively grander scenery we had been spoilt with the last few days. But we were not to be disappointed long; gradually the country became wilder, and we presently entered a narrow valley between overhanging precipitous mountains; along the foot of these ran our road, accompanied by the Wye, now a savage mountain river. In the more sheltered spots were clumps of wild entangled trees of larch and oak and yew; many were mere dead, shattered skeletons, others gnarled and bent with the strife of ages, and showing how severe was the struggle for existence. It was a weird, romantic country, looking lonely and desolate even then in the early morning. How dreary must it not look in gloom and storm! Above us the sunshine lit up the tops of the bare mountains with a wonderful effect: they stood boldly out in a glory of light and rich colouring of golden purple; but all below, in the

narrow dale, was in grey, cold shade, giving a feeling of oppressive gloom. The silence, too, was very marked: we were so hemmed in, there was no air, not a leaflet moved, nor was there any bird we could either see or hear to cheer us on our way—only the fitful sighing and struggling of the mountain river fighting its impetuous way amongst huge boulders that would stay its course, hurrying out of the gloom to the glad sunlight far away.

The road rose gradually, and at last the vale ended. We took a turn to the right and all was changed: another valley, but this time wide and full of the cheerful and life-giving sunshine; it was like coming out of Hades into Paradise. A mile or two along a pleasant road brought us in sight of the village of Rhayader (the names of Welsh places are not easy to spell or to pronounce). It was a bleak, dreary-looking place; however, we found the Red Lion here internally a most cosy and comfortable inn, thanks to the anglers who much frequent this part. Were it not for them I fear we should have fared badly in this dreary mountain hamlet. It was only midday, but there were heavy, threatening clouds gathering all around, and distant but decided growlings of thunder; so we decided to stay the night here and give the horses as well a well earned rest, as we found we had a very lonely road ahead, with doubtful accommodation on the way, and to be caught amongst these bleak mountains in a heavy thunder-storm, with no prospect or chance of shelter, would not be exactly altogether pleasure.

As I have stated, our horn was stolen at Builth.

It was one of peculiar construction, a patent, and of which only a limited number were made, some score or so, as the inventor found the cost of manufacture too heavy for a profitable sale. Strangely enough we had noticed in a small music shop at Brecon, in driving through that town, a similar horn, and we both remarked the curious coincidence of our running against another horn like our stolen one. We knew not the name of the shop or the street, but on chance wrote to the 'Proprietor of a music shop,' describing on the envelope the position of the same as well as we could, asking him to forward us the horn to the Queen's Hotel, Aberystwith, with a bill, and stating we would at once send on the price of the article. The horn was there when we arrived awaiting us, almost to our surprise, for under the circumstances we had hardly expected to get it. We were well pleased with our purchase, and it proved to be an excellent horn: I have it to this day.

We walked down to the river, which here makes a picturesque cascade over some fine rocks, close to a regular old Welsh bridge—how characteristic these Welsh bridges are—a very spot for angler and artist: our only surprise was we saw neither. The name of the place is derived from this fall, Rhayader meaning 'a cataract.'

The weather continued very unsettled; it was thundering more or less all night, and raining at times, and in the morning when we started it was thundering still, with angry-looking clouds all round about. However, it was not actually raining, so we started on our way prepared to face the elements in

their bleak mountain fastnesses. Our road was a wild one, the wildest we had had so far. All amongst lone, bare mountains—grand and dark they stood out against the red thundery sky. It was an impressive day, with scenery to match. We drove steadily on, admiring the wonderful landscape, listening to the thunder echoing and re-echoing amongst the hills, prepared for the storm which we expected momentarily would burst over us, but which luckily never came. On and on we went through a defile of bleak, gaunt, giant mountains, with overhanging crags frowning down upon us ; all around were huge boulders which had in past times been detached from the rocks above, and it appeared a not impossible event that other mighty fragments might be hurled down and crush us.

Rushing, noisy torrents were around in all directions ; it was a desolate day, and a weird, grand drive, and we enjoyed both. Our stage was to the Devil's Bridge, and in about a third of the way there we bade a farewell to the mountain defile, and entered upon a moorland upland, where we discovered a primitive village. We were rejoiced to find even this, for the weather was looking, if possible, worse than ever.

This small collection of human habitations boasted of two inns, or rather public-houses, judging by appearances as primitive as the village. Still shelter of some kind we felt to be imperative, and we were anxious, most of all, about our horses, and if it would be possible to find quarters of any kind for them. We selected and entered what we judged to be the best of the two places of entertainment.

We found the only room or parlour engaged by the clergyman of the place on parish business ; but he hearing of our plight was most polite and kind, and gave us all the assistance in his power. We fortunately managed to get our steeds under shelter, by taking possession of a not overclean or sweet cowshed ; still even that was better than nothing. We were luckily able to procure some beans for a bait, but that was all ; no hay, or oats, or straw was to be had. In case of emergency we always carried some peas and a few oats with us ; these were useful and necessary, not only when we could procure no forage, but when, as often was the case, the corn was of poor quality, and not fit or sufficient for horses doing the journey and work ours were doing. Our private stock we replenished from time to time when passing through towns or country places where what we required was to be obtained. It would of course under any circumstances have been utterly impossible to stay here the night, and we had a bleak, rough, hilly, and inhospitable road before us we learnt ; so our horses fully required whatever food and rest they could get.

The clergyman reassured us as to the house ; he said they were very respectable people who kept it, and we could well manage for a short time. We ordered tea and bread-and-butter and eggs, the only refreshment we could obtain, except beer, and we were only too glad to get this.

While these were being got ready for us, at the rector's invitation we went with him to inspect his little church close by. On the way he complained

much of the antagonistic feeling of the Nonconformists, and of the unpleasantness and disagreeableness of such party spirit. He was very proud of his small but beautiful church, and well he might be, for in its way it was a gem, in a rough setting though, and evidently felt gratified at the genuine pleasure we expressed with the same.

It had been restored by a friend of his, a parishioner, and excellently well restored too ; the carved oak ceiling was worthy of the highest praise, and much artistic feeling had been shown in the restorations of the chancel, &c. It was strange to discover such art work in such a wild, outlandish spot. Considerable zeal has of late years been displayed in endeavouring to restore many of our old buildings, and especially churches, to somewhat of their original condition. Of zeal there has been plenty ; proper or sufficient knowledge has, however, unfortunately, been a rarer commodity. It is sad for those who have a true reverence for the relics of past ages to see some of our beautiful old churches, fraught with the hoary antiquity of centuries, mellowed and tinted by time, irretrievably spoilt by the so-called restorers. Will such never learn the difference between rebuilding and restoring ?

On our return to the village inn we found the best had been made of the room ; a rough but clean cloth was laid, coarse but sweet bread and butter, a rockingham tea-pot was on the table, the tea was passable, and the milk excellent, and need I say we enjoyed our meal ? Our landlady did her best to entertain us, and it would have been ungrateful of

us to complain, even had we cause, which we had not. After our repast we strolled out to inspect the village and the weather. We found here, what we had never seen before in England or elsewhere—a deserted railway, or rather a railway that had been constructed, bridges built, cuttings made, embankments thrown up, &c., everything but rails and stations. We walked along the permanent way for some distance, and wondered much whoever had planned such a railway and brought it to such a spot, and pitied the shareholders. We could not but feel interested in this deserted line. We let fancy have her fling, and imagined railways superseded by some improved aërial or other mode of transit. And this, then, is the remains of one of the old slow railways! We looked upon the grass-grown track in much the same way as people look now upon the tedious old mail coaches and their departed glory.

We returned to our quarters in due course; the clouds still hung undecidedly about, but on the whole the weather looked, though stormy, less threatening, so we determined to start without delay in order to have as much daylight for our journey as possible, for it was now about five o'clock. While the horses were being harnessed we inquired of the landlord—a civil, obliging fellow—if he could give us any particulars of our road on to the Devil's Bridge. In reply he shook his head, and merely said it was a dreadfully bad one, and calling a friend of his they held a consultation. The friend stated the road was a rough one over mountains, but the

difficulty he said was, that there was a nasty river to ford, several miles on, and after rain it often became swollen and dangerous, if not impossible to cross, and he doubted after the weather we had been having if we should be able to get over at all or not. This was pleasant news certainly! However, there was nothing for it but to push forward without delay. The road was level at first, and followed for some distance the wonderful rail-less railroad, till the latter ended nowhere at all in the bleak hillside; then high mountains reared their cloud-covered heads before us, our road took a sudden turn, and we found ourselves in the heart of the Plynlimmon range, over one of the spurs of which giant mountain lay our way. It was a wonderful road, a business-like road as well; knowing what was before it, it made no pretence about the matter but began to mount at once, and in right good earnest too, and we could trace it mounting and mounting as far and as high as our eyes could reach, till it was lost in the distance amongst the mists and clouds that wooed the bleak summit.

The road wound up and alongside a mighty ravine, precipitous slopes and gullies of the vast mountain were on either side of us, no trees or other vegetation but short herbage was visible, and the only life to be seen were a few shaggy sheep, and the only sound to break the profound and melancholy silence was the brawling Wye (we were now nearing its source), as it swirled and whirled and rushed along its way and down its rough bed of gigantic boulders, which, checking its headlong course, caused it to bubble and foam in its rage.

We rose and rose; it required careful driving, for there was no wall or protection of any kind to the road, and at last, after many rests and much climbing, we reached the *col* or top of the pass. Here we found a tumble-down old building, apparently occupied by miners and shepherds, and possibly guides to the peak. It had evidently been an old inn in the coaching days (for this was the old main road from London to Aberystwith), and now in its latter evil days the old hostelrie had been turned into a series of tenements. This dreary and bleak spot (we had risen about 1,500 feet) we found was called by our map Steddfagurig. From here is the best ascent of the many-beaconed Plynlimmon, one of the wildest and least known of Welsh mountains—it deserves a better fate. It is somewhat of a difficult climb on account of the many concealed and treacherous bogs. Its summit, or rather summits, consist of three separate peaks of nearly equal heights, and from the deep recesses of this silent, solitary, and grand old mountain flow forth five rivers, the Rheidol, the Llyfnant, the Clywedog, the Severn, and the Wye, the two latter being of world-wide fame, and all being beautiful. We had traced the Wye from the sea to its desolate birthplace, so different to the peaceful woodland scenery it traverses in its later wanderings. And now our Wyeward journeyings were finished. Thus, after many pleasant days of her goodly company, we were reluctantly compelled to bid her a long good-bye, and began our descent by a very similar valley to the one we had ascended. The road twisted and turned about,

following the general contour of the mountain-side, and to the left it was built up here and there to a considerable height.

The road was rough, very rough, and the many nasty loose stones about made one cautious in driving, especially as there was absolutely no wall or protection of any kind, and in case of a slip or an accident we did not wish to run the risk of being dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

Our brake was hard on, our horses away from the pole, and we made what speed we could with due regard to safety, as we were anxious to arrive at the ford before the evening set in.

As we descended the scenery gradually grew less and less wild ; lead mines or workings here and there made ugly scars on the hillsides, stunted trees began to appear, then others of more vigorous growth, till at last at the foot of the pass we came upon a small village, of unpronounceable name, and finding a roadside inn there, we gave the horses some gruel and a short rest. About a mile farther on we came upon the long-dreaded ford ; it certainly did not look very dreadful, nor very wide, perhaps little more than the width of an ordinary turnpike road. We should not have thought much about it, but after the ominous and decided warnings we had given us we deemed it best to be prudent and to proceed with caution, especially as the river we had to cross was running with considerable force.

The horses shied a little at the water, but we kept them well in hand, and at once plunged into the stream ; one of our steeds gave a stumble, for

there were many large and nasty loose stones and miniature boulders at the bottom, washed down no doubt from the mountains. The water came up to our axles, and in the middle we had a nasty jerk over a deeper portion of the river bed; and we had a stiff climb up the other side, necessitating the free use of the whip—and that was all. In less time than it takes to read about it we were over the ford, and laughing at our anxieties and fears. So do not evils generally look worse at a distance, and when bravely met how often do they not collapse? Still after a heavy spate when the river was running with great force and violence, as I can well imagine it could, no doubt it would be unwise to attempt if not actually impossible to cross at this spot. However, we were well over, and rejoiced all had gone so well. The road now began to climb again, and very severe some of the rises were, and trying to our tired steeds. We had not far to drive fortunately, and soon came upon our destination, and were led by the gleaming lights from its windows (for it was now late and dark) to the Devil's Bridge Hotel, where after our long day's stage and adventures we slept soundly and well, lulled to sleep by the soothing music of the waterfalls.

We were up early next morning, anxious to see the falls and all that was to be seen in this romantic spot, but not so early but that an officer on leave had already arrived, having driven over with the postman in his trap all the way from Aberystwith, and was hunting about to find the guide. We had bespoken him overnight and so invited the stranger to join

us, and at once started on our tour of inspection. The scenery of the Devil's Bridge is certainly unique, there is nothing just like it anywhere in the world, as far as I know. We first inspected the two bridges one above the other, the hoary and crumbling erection, which is ascribed to Satanic agency, being the lowest, but which was most probably built by the monks of Strata Florida Abbey, near by. How is it, I wonder, that all the Devil's bridges (the famed one on the St. Gothard pass is a good example) consist, as does this one, of two structures one immediately over the other? This fact has always appeared to me rather a curious one, certainly the coincidences are strange. From where we stood, upon the topmost bridge, the view was simply magnificent. I can only compare it to the Yosemite Valley in California, of which it somewhat reminded me, though of course the precipices are nothing like so high; still our home scenery has a peculiar grandeur of its own, once seen neither to be despised nor forgotten. The two bridges hang over a mighty chasm, narrow but of profound depth, and looking over their side we beheld the seething torrent plunging madly down to the bottom of the darkly grey abyss, till, hidden by the overhanging foliage of trees, which clothe in a wonderful manner the precipitous mountain-sides, we lost sight of the wonderful fall. The ravine stretches westwards for a mile or more, and appears to me to be of a decidedly volcanic nature, or due to some sudden disruption or contraction of this portion of the earth's surface, caused by some such agency. It is

true many geologists, as our guide informed us, attribute the gorge to the sole work of the impetuous river Rheidol. But here I would shake a lance with them. Take a general view of the ravine and you cannot but be struck at the appearance of the two sides; they seem as, if you could only close them together again, they would almost exactly fit into each other. A projection is here on one side, an equal recess on the other, and *vice versâ*, and besides there is a general look that reminds one distinctly of the Yosemite Valley, which without doubt has been rent asunder by some gigantic volcanic force; the old volcanoes there still rearing their heads, and showing signs of comparatively recent action. Had this ravine been formed by the wearing effect of water alone it would have surely worn away the many projecting portions of rocks and have equally tended to fill up the recesses on the other side; which, by the way, water alone could hardly have formed. For the more the rocks projected the more would be the friction, and the stronger they would be attacked, not only by the foaming torrent but by the numerous stones, boulders, grit, &c., washed down by the same, and which do so much of the work of carving and scooping. It appears to me—of course I may be altogether wrong, but as I have said it appears to me that the gorge was first formed by some mighty eruptive agency, and the river found its way there in the natural course of events. The upper sides of the precipices of course show signs of weathering, the storms and frosts of ages well account for

all they show. It should be remembered that Snowdon, Cader Idris, and other Welsh mountains were at one time active volcanoes, the latter mountain being capped with lava.

Having gazed long, though not so long as we could have wished, the guide hurried us downwards by steep paths amongst trees to a closer view of the different cascades, the chief of which falls directly over a perpendicular precipice of nearly 120 feet; there are besides other falls, making altogether one grand cascade or torrent of some 315 feet, the rocks on either side rising to a sheer height of 800 feet or more. We descended to the bottom of the valley, and crossing the river ascended the other side, and from a projecting rock had a splendid view of the falls, and of the narrow gloomy chasm, over which the ancient Devil's Bridge, high overhead, hung spectrally across, half-hidden in mysterious shadow. But I feel how puny is my description to the grand reality. A recent writer has said of this spot, 'It is a scene to be feasted on, trembled at, and dreamed of sleeping or waking; but not to be pre-conceived, painted, or described.' After that perhaps I had better say no more. There are other falls near here to be seen, those of the Mynach, set amongst the wildest scenery, which rival if they do not actually excel those of the more famed Devil's Bridge. We spent nearly the whole day exploring the beauties and wonders of this locality, and felt the time all too short. During the day a private drag and four, with a party doing Wales in like manner to ourselves, put up at the hotel. We at once fraternized with the

chief of the same, comparing notes as to inns, roads, &c., and were fortunately able to give each other valuable and welcome information. We met the party again on our travels.

It was late in the afternoon before we started on our way to Aberystwith; we had a steep hill to climb commencing at the hotel door, and we soon reached a high level and found ourselves amongst wild bleak scenery, and meeting a bracing air that sent life into our souls. We had grand views of deep valleys and glens and glistening streams all around, and in one place we came across a very fine cascade. Up and down the road went—it appeared to us much more up than down—traversing the airy tops of bare uninhabitable hills, but our elevation afforded us splendid prospects of the grand scenery in all directions, which appeared to us very rugged, and showing plainly the signs of the mighty upheavals this part of the world had undergone in the far-off pre-historic ages. Mightier mountains there are, but nowhere else in Wales did the scenery impress us more, nowhere do the hidden forces of nature show so plainly their all-powerful hand. Ten thousand years or more ago—we wondered what did the country we were travelling over look like then—or should we add many times ten thousand and then hardly arrive at the time when all here was chaos and trembling matter? A time when fierce forces were at work, a time when the present scenery was commenced; it can hardly be called finished yet. At last, after much climbing and driving along the tops of high mountainous land, our sky-soaring road began to descend, and in front

of us, down at the foot of a long hill, lay Aberystwith, and high on the horizon was the sea. So far westward had we journeyed, we could no farther go.

The sun was setting in a glory of crimson and gold, the pale crescent of the moon was peeping shyly forth ; it was that delightful poetic time, that uncertain border-land between day and night, belonging to both yet of neither. There was a gentle motion on the sea, a soothing ocean-borne breeze ; and as the wavelets rolled one after the other shorewards along, the setting sun caught their hollows and crests, causing them to gleam and glitter like molten gold, the shadows being of a pearly grey in the distance, and gradually emerging into a bottle green nearer the coast. Aberystwith itself was all in shade, relieved here and there by the reflected sunlight which flashed forth from numerous windows, and from many a house-top; all the rest of the town was indistinct, misty, and uncertain, save where a restless golden vane stood prominently forth, with a sudden flashing gleam as it caught the parting light. As we drove onwards the light gradually died away, and soon all the landscape was of a silvery grey, and the moon alone was mistress of the sky, and light white clouds floated lazily along, like fairy isles upon an aërial sea, which now and again partially, but not wholly, concealed her. What a wonderful and changing colour there is everywhere if we would only look for it ! Walk with an artist but for an hour and listen to his talk, and you will find your eyes getting by degrees educated to the wonderful variety of colouring there is round about you ; then in time you may

appreciate the wonderful works of Turner, and perchance at last perceive how, far from overdoing nature (as he has been accused of), he, by the very poorness of the pigments mankind is obliged to use, has nowhere approached even to the real beauty, variety, and brilliancy of her matchless work.

Take the sky for instance; no mere blue paint, however intense, can approach at all near to it, except by forced comparison of colouring. We have only a poor, dull, earthy pigment to express blue fire with. If you do not credit this, paint a sky with pure colour, using the most brilliant and intense blue you can find, hold it up and compare it with the original, and see how poor and grey and dull it is. You must needs dip your brush in liquids of blue and gold and crimson fire if you would rival nature's handiwork.

In due course we reached Aberystwith, and were soon driving along the Marine Terrace (it should surely be called a crescent) that faces the sea. As we saw it then the town looked very beautiful, the dim light hid all the harsher features of the place, the moon's pathway was on the water, and the waves were making softest music as they toyed with the pebbles on the shore; pebbles amongst which visitors find cornelians, agates, jaspers, and crystals. The Queen's Hotel here we found to be quite a grand building, with but few guests, which gave it a rather desolate look.

The next morning we made a tour of inspection. The portion of the town facing the sea puts on a fair appearance, but the streets in the rear did not please us as much. We met here again the party

with the coach, who had put up at another inn in the place. We found a pier here, with one or two people solemnly pacing up and down, but no band. A picturesque and many-gabled building at the south end of the Marine Terrace we discovered to be the Welsh University College. This edifice we were informed was originally intended for a monster hotel, and was planned on a scale of unusual magnificence; however, when some 80,000*l.* had been expended, the scheme fell through, and the incompleted building was sold for 10,000*l.* for the above purpose. The edifice is a most picturesque and original erection, and it is a pity it was never finished properly; it would undoubtedly have been one of the finest and most charmingly situated of any seaside hostelrie in Great Britain. The grand attraction, however, of Aberystwith after the sea is most decidedly the hoary old castle, which stands proudly upon a grand rocky headland at the north end of the bay. Here both sea and mountain air are to be had in unlimited abundance and of the finest quality. The castle was originally built by Gilbert the Strongbow in 1109. Like most old strongholds it has had an eventful history, having been several times stormed and destroyed, and as often rebuilt, till, last of all, the inevitable Cromwell (is there any old castle in England he has not either personally or by proxy destroyed, I wonder ?) came and laid the place in ruins.

Aberystwith is finely situated in the centre of Cardigan Bay, and faces due west, and is well placed (as the Americans would say). There is a

tradition that this bay was once upon a time dry land, and that where now there is nothing but water, was in days long gone by a rich cultivated district with a considerable population. This inroad of the sea is supposed to have taken place about the year 500. The story is that a drunkard, in charge of the flood-gates of an embankment, opened the same instead of closing them, the result being that this fair province was submerged. There is probably some truth in the tradition, so far as the ocean having ravaged some portions of land here, as the sea-bed consists in places of decayed forests, &c. As to whether it is equally true, as stated by the fishermen, that in tranquil weather far out at sea ruined buildings are still to be seen, is, to say the least, extremely doubtful.

CHAPTER VII.

Difficulty of Pronouncing Welsh Names—The British Climate—Aberdovey—Changing Scenery—Machynlleth—Welsh Boulevards—An Artistic Room—The Dovey—An Ancient Bard and Seer—A Toy Railway—Corris Quarries—A Steep Road—A Gloomy Mountain—Tal-y-llyn—The Pool of the Three Pebbles—The Rock of the Leap—Dolgelly—A Growing Steeple!—Photographs *versus* Sketches—Cader Idris—The Torrent Walk—Nannau Park—Old British Stronghold—The Precipice Walk—Homespuns and Flannels—The Demon's Oak.

To us, so long used to the freedom of the country, Aberystwith had not many attractions. We were told the place improved upon acquaintance, and if we only stayed on a few days, or a week, we should be charmed with the spot, a statement we thought open to doubt; at any rate we did not try the experiment, we simply remained over a day to give our horses a good rest. No doubt as a seaside resort Aberystwith has its advantages, the bracing yet not too bleak or cold west wind is the very thing for certain invalids, and for others who come for pleasure and a change there are the usual watering-place dissipations to be had, though I should judge of a somewhat mild and innocent sort. Anyway, after our short sojourn there we were very glad to resume our wanderings and Bohemian kind of life.

Machynlleth was our next stage, a name a great deal easier to write than to pronounce. It was a

good thing for us we had trusty maps here, for the difficulty of asking your way in Wales is often very great. It is a hundred to one if you can pronounce the names of many of the places in a manner at all likely to be understood by the natives; to do so requires a special education. We had a hilly road and a glorious drive; the day was perfection, neither too hot nor too cold; a genial summer's morning made the beautiful country through which we were driving seem doubly perfect. As an American writer remarks of our climate, 'It takes a good many foul days in Great Britain to breed a fair one, but when the fair day does come, it is worth the price paid for it.' Abuse our climate as we will, and certainly at times, in November especially, it fully deserves the worst abuse, still, take it one thing with another all the year round, there is no other climate I know of I would care to change it for. As Charles II. said, we have never a day too hot or too cold for out-door work and enjoyment, and though unfortunately, as all good things are, a perfect day with us is somewhat of a *rara avis*, still when we do have it, it is a something to be remembered.

A few miles on our way, in a lonely portion of the country, we put our new horn to the test, and to our delight found it to be a most excellent one, and we discovered whilst using it some capital echoes, which resounded from some rocky cliffs with a wonderful effect. We had fine peeps of the distant sea to our left now and again, and obtained a good view of the solitary seaside resort of Borth, the big hotel being the chief object visible. Borth, without

doubt, is a healthy spot, and possibly has a splendid beach, but I should judge its attractions ended there. At the top of a hill, affording us a glorious prospect ahead of the magnificent estuary of the Dovey, we pulled the horses up, and gave them as a treat a few handfuls of deliciously fresh clover, which we found by the wayside, close to a sparkling stream. Whilst our steeds were enjoying their rest we gathered some ferns and wild flowers, and sitting down upon an old grey moss-covered rock we arranged the same into a pretty bouquet. The spot we had selected for our midday halt was a most romantic one. We were in a sheltered dell or dingle, though on such high ground; on either side of us were dark Scotch firs and other trees, forming an agreeable and needful shade; a little rivulet almost hidden by ferns passed us by with a grateful cooling sound, and all amongst the trees, half hidden by deep bracken and overgrowing brambles, were rocks of every imaginable shape and colouring. From out this restful spot we looked dreamily upon the fine expanse of landscape spread out before us, all bathed in a glory of sunshine and summer haze. We looked across the smiling country at our feet, and over the broad river farther on to the quaint, peaceful, romantic hamlet of Aberdovey. Who has not heard of the bells of Aberdovey?

The fine estuary of the Dovey appears to me to have been in ages past the bed of some gigantic glacier, which has ploughed and scooped its way along the broad valley from the surrounding mountains. I only surmise such possibly was the case

from the general appearance and contour of the country, but of course my suppositions may be wrong. I certainly failed to notice any glacier markings or scratchings on the rocks as we drove along the estuary; but these might be easily missed, even presuming many to exist after the weathering and wear and tear of frosts and storms of countless years.

The country about here we felt to be very characteristic of Wales, and affording a great contrast to the reposeful, finished look of English scenery generally. Here one sees, as it were, the very framework of the land, the gaunt bare rocks show plainly the history of the forces that have left this portion of the world as it now is. In England, as a rule, the bare rocks are mellowed down and covered with a fruitful soil, it may be of marl or chalk or clay, and with the soil has come verdure; inequalities of land have been gently rounded off, and then covered with a profuse vegetation. English scenery has a look of domesticity, a homelike, restful look; here in Wales one feels the scenery is not yet completed, changes are continually going on. The bare ribs of the earth here are without any covering; heat and cold, storm and frost, are gradually, imperceptibly almost, but as certainly changing the landscape. It will take countless centuries to make any very appreciable difference, but the agencies of nature are slowly, but as surely at work. Hills must in time become lower, lakes and valleys be filled up. There was a time when the mountains were much higher than they are now, a time when the valleys

were not in existence. First amongst the earlier forces there has been the volcanic period, in the days when the world was comparatively young, raising the land and the mountains from out of the sea; then the glacial period came, a time of short hot summers and long arctic winters, with glaciers scooping and ploughing their way along the valleys they found in existence. Now is the time of the gentler forces, gentler but equally destructive, although slower in their working. Take any mountain, even those consisting of the hardest rock, it is gradually being crumbled to dust; heat and cold help to split and pulverize the rock, but most of all rain and frost. The wet penetrates everywhere, every little cranny or imperceptible crevice, and is besides absorbed by many of the softer rocks; then comes the frost, the water expands and occupies more space, portions of the rock, it may be very little, scale off, larger pieces are split away, and these in their turn are attacked in like manner. Heat and cold, too, do their part very effectually, and before them even the mighty granite succumbs. The summer's sun heats the stone, at night it cools; rocks are composed of different materials and minerals, in heating these do not expand, nor in cooling do they contract equally, consequently there is a destructive pulling and dragging going on. Summer and winter these different forces are continually at work, pounding the toughest rocks to dust. Streams and running water carry the crumbled matter away down into the valleys below. Unless one experiments on the subject, it is difficult to realize the power and energy with which the

above agents of denudation carry on their ceaseless work. There is the little innocent watercourse close to us; surely this must be a most harmless one; it is not an impetuous torrent, taking down stones and refuse in large quantities, and grinding the former on its way to pebbles and sand; it is but a simple trickling stream. Let us take a tumblerful of water from it and let it rest; in time we shall find a slight sediment—a very, very little certainly, only perhaps a few grains, but still there is some. Well, this stream is for ever going on, night and day, incessantly; every gallon of water takes so much of the mountain down to the valley. A friend of mine residing in a hilly country has a fair-sized trout pond in his grounds, through which a small stream flows, coming direct from the moors; that little stream manages to bring down sufficient matter and sand to fill up that pond in less time than three years. Imagine this constantly going on in countless numbers of watercourses, some bringing down a considerable amount of soil, others of course less, but all for ever at work. Should nothing unforeseen occur to alter the disposition of the present forces, it is easy to perceive, in eons of ages to come, the valleys will be all filled up and the mountains laid low. Wales then, if the world is still in existence, will be a country more like central England; the denuded rocks, buried and turned to dust, will cover the country with a rich, fertile soil.

It has been calculated that over 500,000 tons of dissolved matter and otherwise is annually brought down by the Thames, coming from the hills and

high lands along its course, and this in a comparatively peaceful and pastoral river. This is a startling fact.

The road onwards continued to be very picturesque and beautiful, with grand views of surrounding mountains. Presently we descended into the valley and our road ran alongside of the Dovey, with a railway for company, whose companionship we could very well, and would most willingly, have dispensed with. River, road, and rail were all close together. The railway came uncomfortably near to the road in places, without any other protection than a low quickset hedge; we were certainly not nervous, but we were glad to get over one or two stretches of the way without meeting a train. It is possibly, with careful driving, not so dangerous in the daytime, though quite enough so; but at night, to meet the snorting iron-horse, with its breath of fire, coming suddenly upon you at a considerable speed round an unexpected corner, is not very agreeable, or conducive to safe travelling. We could only hope and trust that the horses about here were old stagers, and not very restive. It certainly is a shame that railways should be allowed to run so close by and parallel to the roadway, without a wall or other efficient protection.

We found Machynlleth to be a very pleasantly situated town. It has fine, straight, wide streets, boulevards in fact, trees being planted on either side of the same. This gives the place a very different appearance to the generality of Welsh towns, with their narrow, twisting roads. But then Wales is not

a country of towns; it excels in scenery. Machynlleth is not without a history. The Romans of old had a station here to keep in awe the unruly and unconquered mountaineers. Many Roman coins and other vestiges of their occupation have been discovered from time to time. It was here, in 1402, after his series of victories over the English, that Owen Glyndwr, in an old Senate-house, a portion of which still remains, was crowned King of Wales. A certain chieftain who took part in the coronation, one David Gam, of Breconshire, was bribed by the King of England to assassinate him. The plot was, however, discovered in time, and Gam, who in some extraordinary manner got off with his life, was closely imprisoned for some years; eventually he made his escape and proceeded to England, and joined the army of Henry V. and fell valiantly fighting for him at Agincourt. Before the battle the King asked him to reconnoitre the enemy; he did so, and on returning informed his master 'there were enough to kill, enough to be made prisoners, and enough to run away.'

Machynlleth is one of the few Welsh towns that have kept pace with the spirit of modern improvements; there is a handsome clock tower, quite an ornament to the place, in one of the principal streets. It was erected in commemoration of the coming of age of Lord Castlereagh, son of the Marquis of Londonderry, who has a fine country seat close by. We found at the Lion every comfort, and capital quarters for our horses. Our bedroom here was most artistically furnished, quite a little gem, and fit

for a princess, and would have done honour to any lady's house. I mention this, as out of the hundreds of hotels I have stayed at from time to time, this was the only really artistic room of any sort it has been my fortune to meet with at an hotel. One hardly expects, at least in the present year of grace, to find art at an inn.

The river Dovey here divides the two counties, and it does somewhat more than that; for, strange to say, it separates the mineral wealth also, Merionethshire on the north being noted for its slate, and Montgomeryshire, through which we had been travelling, for its lead. Attempts have been made in vain on the south of the river to find slate, and I believe the search for lead on the north has been an equal failure. Such a narrow and so decided a dividing line, by a small river, is a strange geological fact.

An Australian we had met overnight in the coffee-room of our hotel took a great interest in our driving tour, as in fact did most of the people we met or conversed with; and we in our turn took a great interest in hearing about the colony and his views of the old country and of things in general. He proved to be an agreeable and entertaining companion, and we passed a very pleasant evening. In all my journeyings, though I have met with many Americans, Canadians, and others, I never before came across an Australian. I wish we could see more of them in old England; judging from the one I met, they are regular chips of the old block, and of the right sort.

Here I may perhaps remark, at the various hotels on our way, where possible, we patronized the coffee-room, as being more cheerful, less expensive, and enabling us from time to time to have a chat with other visitors, if we cared to do so, and from whom we often gathered much local information, interesting and otherwise. We found, too, the coffee-room to be more comfortable and entertaining than being stuck into a solitary and generally stuffy little sitting-room, all to ourselves, though we found it was not always easy to have our way in this respect. The extra charge, &c., for a sitting-room, with no extra expense, is too great a temptation for landlords and landladies to resist. Driving with a carriage and pair, we were considered often—not always, I am glad to say—fair game. If we inquired for a coffee-room they were very sorry they had not one, or it was engaged for a dinner that evening, or, as in one case I was calmly told by the waiter, that though they certainly had a coffee-room, it was full of farmers and a rough lot, and I could not possibly take a lady in. So of course we had to put up with some inferior room ; in the latter case, as soon as our wraps and trunks had been taken out of the carriage, for curiosity I went alone to inspect the rough company, and found the coffee-room absolutely empty ! It was a large, cheerful room, with an inhabited look, and far more comfortable than the tiny box of a chamber we had to put up with, and pay highly for.

A glorious morning, with bright sunshine after a few slight showers, tempted us to make an early

start. We had had our maps and road-books out, and well studied them the night before, the result being we had to-day determined to make our way on to Dolgelly, and spend the night at that town, under the shadow of the mighty Cader Idris. We passed near to Machynlleth, the place where once lived Davydd-ap-Gruffydd, a bard and seer of much reputation in the olden time when bards and seers flourished. So great was his note that the Earl of Richmond, on his march from Milford, came purposely to consult him respecting his hazardous enterprise. The seer was perplexed how to answer the powerful earl, and feared what reply to make to him. He stated, however, he always required twenty-four hours to work his oracle, and meanwhile, in trepidation, consulted, like a wise man, his wife. She told him not to have any alarm, but at once to state that the enterprise would have a glorious and successful termination ; 'for,' said she, with the far-seeing wisdom of a woman, 'if your prophecy is true you will receive great honours and rewards, but if it fails you need have no fear you will ever see the earl again.'

After crossing the river Dovey the road entered a deep glen in the mountains. High on each side of us were steep hills, covered principally with firs, but interspersed with various other trees. Below us was a fine specimen of a rocky river, which here and there took headlong plunges from steep to steep, at the bottom of which plunges the waters boiled and seethed and bubbled and foamed. Half-hidden with overhanging rocks and trees, the stream itself

was a picture—a very *beau-idéal* of a Welsh mountain torrent. If it had a fault, if fault it can be called, it was that the surroundings appeared almost too sylvan for such an impetuous current of water. Altogether the winding road, the wooded hillsides, the plunging stream, made a scene, brightened up by the bright sunshine, not readily to be forgotten. To the right of us as we drove along, following closely—too closely, perhaps—to the turnings and twistings of the road, was one of the wonderful toy railways for which Wales has become so famous. This railway, like others in various parts of the Principality, owes its existence to the Festiniog one, which has become noted all over the world, and is the parent of all other similar ones elsewhere. It is an extraordinary line; it has a gauge of only two feet, with liliputian engines and stations and everything else to match; engines over which an agile man could easily vault. The men attending to the railway looked quite giants, and out of harmony with the same. We felt we could imagine ourselves in a country of dwarfs and this was one of their railways.

For six miles or so our road wound up this lovely glen, with the toy rails keeping us company, till at last we emerged from out of the sylvan valley and came suddenly upon a bleak upland village surrounded by slate quarries. And what a change of scene! All was now bare and barren, as though some curse had fallen on this part of the world. The village itself, as most mining villages are, was the perfection of ugliness; the huge scars on the

mountains' sides, caused by the quarrying operations, spoilt even whatever beauty there might have been in the surrounding country ; and as if possible to make matters still worse, a great square box, doing duty for a Methodist chapel, stood prominently forth. There was positively no redeeming feature about the place, unless it was the fine, bracing air. What a contrast to the quiet beauty of the last few miles ! This, then, explained the mystery of the railway up that sylvan glade : it was to take the slates down to Machynlleth. Instead of garden, the cottages had for ornaments pigsties ; but I must not neglect, when so liberally finding fault with Corris and all its surroundings, to state one good quality of the womankind here : we found them everywhere industrious, and sitting in their doorways busily knitting ; an example English cottagers might follow with advantage.

We hastened on through the village and past the ugly quarries, and came upon a desolate mountain country. The road became now very hilly and lonely ; there was an oppressive silence everywhere, a solitude that could be felt but not described ; a solitude not of the lowlands or of the deserted forest, but of dim, sombre space. The sound of a torrent would have been a welcome relief, but there was nothing to break the melancholy stillness save the crunching of our wheels along the rough, stony road, the tramp of our horses' feet, and the measured rattling of our pole-chains—that was all. The atmosphere with the scenery had changed ; it was cold and raw, even on this hot summer day. There

was no breeze, only a cold, chilly air. We drove on; on either side of us was black, peaty, boggy soil, with rocks of slate and porphyry and quartz showing here and there. At last we came to the highest part of our road, and we began a sudden and very nasty descent. So steep and rough was it in places that we found it necessary to dismount and to tie our wheels to the brake, as that alone would not hold the carriage back, the horses having quite enough to do to get along safely themselves, without the whole weight of the phaeton pressing on them, continually and with much suddenness, at each extra steep bit. I do not complain of the road; one could hardly expect anything so good even as it was over such a trackless waste; so long as there was a way at all where we could get along we were content. As we descended a glorious spectacle arose before us. Right in front of us loomed up the forbidding-looking Cader Idris; a very king amongst mountains, dark and frowning he looked, his bifid summit hid in clouds. He presented to us a stupendous precipice of some two thousand feet, or more. Such impressive scenes are not to be viewed every day, and once seen, they are for ever impressed on the memory. Mere actual height is not everything in mountain scenery, there is a something indescribably overawing in the dark, sombre hue of Welsh mountains when seen under a stormy or a cloudy sky. Their sharp peaks, too, and terrible precipices, give one an impression of grandeur and power mere actual height can never give. In colour and outline the

Welsh hills are unique. We had been so lost in admiration in gazing upon this gloomy and sublime mountain that we did not for some time notice a very fine tarn or lake to our left, right at the foot of its frowning precipice, called, we found by our map, Tal-y-llyn. It shone out of the dark shade like a piece of molten silver—a veritable beauty sleeping in the lap of horror. The lake is about a mile long by not quite half as much wide. But clouds began to gather ominously over the top of Cader Idris, and as we were in a bleak, inhospitable country we deemed it prudent not to linger here too long, so we proceeded on our way without further delay. Presently the road took a bend, and we had some two or three miles' stiff collar work up a wild, stony ravine, along the bottom of which ran a noisy torrent.

It was a wild, savage pass; on either side of us rose rugged and stupendous cliffs, and at their feet lay huge boulders, wrecked portions of the same. Nearly at the top of the pass, in one of the gloomiest parts—if one part deserved to be called more so than another—under one of these mighty cliffs lay a dark, weird-looking pool (tradition says it is unfathomable) called Llyn-tri-Graienyn, or the Pool of the Three Pebbles. It takes its name from three large fragments of rocks split off in past ages from the precipice overhead. Welshmen locally say these were three pebbles which the giant Idris felt in his boots when walking, and finding them uncomfortable, he took his shoes off and threw them down here. According to which tradition one can-

not but conclude 'there were giants in those days.' The crag immediately over the tarn is called Craig-y-Llam—*anglicè*, The Rock of the Leap. In ancient times criminals were cast over this terrible cliff and were dashed to pieces on the rocks below. We presently reached the top of the pass, and after a few miles of dark, peaty, swampy moors the scenery totally changed; from the Cross Foxes, a wayside inn, on to Dolgelly the scenery was as lovely as it is possible for scenery to be. Indeed, we felt we had never before seen anything so beautiful; but doubtless the gloomy and oppressive country through which we had so lately passed caused us to look upon the varied woods and lovely valley that lay spread out in all its glory before us with more than even our usual enthusiasm. We drove past and through resinous-scented woods of pine and larch and beech, with sunlit hills peeping over all around; and now and again we caught delicious glimpses of the shining river beyond. Many bright and murmuring streams crossed our path, the birds were singing joyously, and the half-mournful cadence of softest zephyrs came to us from far away. Nature was at her brightest and best; no wonder we thought the country about here surpassingly beautiful.

Dolgelly is an old town—a very old town; it appears to be built upon quite an original and most incomprehensible plan, or rather perhaps no plan at all. The streets and the roads lead everywhere and nowhere, and the houses are all over the place, here and there, apparently stuck down just where the

good people of generations long ago thought fit, without any regard to uniformity or the general convenience. They were an independent lot, those old Welshmen; every man's house was his castle, and a castle to be placed just where he chose.

A gentleman of the neighbourhood thus described the town to some of his friends after dinner. It was at dessert, and he took a decanter, and placing it on the table, he said, 'You see this, well, let it represent the church;' then taking some walnuts in his hand, he let them fall over the decanter where they would, 'and these,' he said, 'are the houses.' And you could not describe Dolgelly better. Of this place an old writer says, 'It is entered under water, and departed from over water, and it hath walls three miles high, and the steeple thereof doth grow!' A rather wonderful description, the solution of which is: as you enter the town from one side there is a mill, the wheel of which is fed by water carried over the road in a wooden trough; so that you enter it under water. You leave it by a bridge over the river Union. The growing steeple was a tree, whereon the church bell used to be hung. The walls are the mountains round about. We put up at the Golden Lion here, and found fairly comfortable quarters in that ancient hostelrie, though perhaps a little rough. However, the food was well cooked, and the fresh trout were delicious. In the evening we walked in the hotel garden, and as is our wont, when we are able to do so, chatted with the landlord, a man who knew the surrounding country by heart, and we learnt much of its local

history and traditions from him, many of which, though of much interest, would be too long to relate here.

Dolgelly is noted for its flannels and homespuns, for the manufacture of which we discovered here and there, hidden as it were in out-of-the-way corners, various old-fashioned and antique mills; the many streams around supplying the required motive power. We wandered along by the river, and watched the patient anglers enjoying their art; but long watching did not reward us by seeing any captures of the finny tribe. Surely there must be something very fascinating in the gentle sport, or men would not devote so much time with so little result. I always carry a trout rod with me and a few flies, but did not feel tempted to use them here. My sketch-book was by preference brought into requisition; how many enjoyable hours have I not spent with it and my water colours, and how many gems and delightful bits (to use an artist's expression) have I not now in my portfolio, the results of much pleasurable toil. Work becomes a labour only when we do not care for what we do. What pleasant recollections, what numerous and varied scenes do not those sketches recall whenever I look over them, or show them to a friend! How poor and feeble are even the finest photographs compared to the merest sketch, if at all skilfully done! The former are without expression or correct tone, lifeless and colourless; the other has all these and more, it gives the author's own feeling of the scene, conveying to the beholder a peculiar charm; a charm a simple pho-

tograph can never hope to have or give. The one is soulless, and without poetry (a mechanical lens can have no feeling), the other should have both. For representing buildings and the interiors of the same photography has certainly some advantages, especially where there are minute details; for scenery it has none. But for those who cannot paint, or afford to purchase paintings, photography supplies a want. Speaking for myself, a photograph of any scene never gives to me a correct impression of nature. All her delicate gradations, colours, aërial effects, and suggestions are wanting, and without these no representation of scenery can be true or correct. Besides, the perspective of a landscape as photographed is always incorrect; this fact may escape the notice of those who are not artists, but still it is a fact, and it cannot be otherwise; for a lens (other things even being equal, which is not the case) can never form the same image as do two separate eyes focussed as one.

There is much to be seen at and around Dolgelly; in every direction there is something interesting to visit. Cader Idris is of course the lion of the place; but we did not attempt the ascent, as the weather was not favourable for the same. The peak of the mountain was hidden by envious clouds; consequently we should most probably have had no reward, even had we undertaken the arduous climb to the summit.

Our first excursion was to the Torrent Walk, a spot for which Dolgelly is famous, and a place all visitors to that town should not fail to see. A more

charming ramble on a hot summer's day could hardly be imagined. The walk consists of a mile or more of gentle climbing along the side of a mountain torrent, the whole course of which is overhung with a dense foliage of many trees, and the banks of the stream are beautiful with many ferns, which grow most luxuriantly. It is a perfect natural fernery. The way the water splashes and foams and tumbles, and leaps from rock to shallow, is not to be described. The walk, which appears all too short, ends in a most satisfactory manner with a picturesque cascade. Had the whole scene been made to order, in no respect could it possibly have been improved upon.

Another charming ramble was to Nannau, where in remote times lived one Howel Sele, who was a cousin and also a very determined enemy of Owen Glyndwr. Nannau is romantically situated high up on the mountain's side, some three miles or so from Dolgelly; it is supposed to occupy the loftiest site of any gentleman's residence in Great Britain. At the top of a rocky hill near here is a circle, formed of a complete rampart of stones, evidently an ancient British stronghold. Near here is the noted Precipice Walk; the path is a very narrow one in places, and requires good nerves and a steady head to traverse, but the reward is great, for all around the alpine views are glorious. It is a grand walk along this dizzy height, and it reminded us very much in parts of a Swiss pass. Returning to Nannau, a sundial now marks the spot where formerly stood an aged oak which possessed a history. The Haunted

Oak, or the Demon's Oak, as it was respectively called, was a great hollow tree in which Owen Glyndwr hid the body of the Lord of Nannau after he had slain him. It appears Owen and this chieftain had always been at daggers drawn. The pious Abbot of Cymmer, however, brought them together, and endeavoured for the country's sake to reconcile them. However, whilst walking out apparently in a peaceful, if not friendly manner with each other, Howel Sele suddenly turned upon his companion, and endeavoured to slay him. Owen, who wore armour beneath his clothes, fortunately escaped the blow, and in turn murdered his opponent, after which he burnt his house, and hid his body as described.

On our road back to Dolgelly we peeped into many of the flannel and tweed mills; we found them as picturesque as other manufactories of the sort are ugly in towns. They are all most romantically situated, and worked, as I have said before, by water power, and sometimes even by hand only. We inspected some of the tweeds, and were much pleased with the same. They are economical in price, and we were told by a friend who had bought some of the homespun, excellent in wear. We took the address of one of the makers, so as to be able to obtain some of the cloth at a future time.

CHAPTER VIII.

Llanelltyd Bridge—British Gold Mines—Tyn-y-groes Falls—A R markable Shower—A Terribly Bad Road—Old Roman Way—Trawsvynydd—Cromlechs—A Barren Land—Ancient Forests—The Vale of Festiniog—Tan-y-Bwlch—A Melancholy Acciden —A 2-feet Railway—The Black Cataract and the Raven Falls—Beddgelert—Gelert's Grave—A Welsh Matterhorn—Pont Aberglaslyn and Pass—Merlin and Vortigern—Nant Gwynant and the Gwynant Lakes—A Wandering Echo—Water *versus* Volcanic Action—Pen-y-Gwryd—A Lonely Inn—Goats.

We should have liked very much to have prolonged our stay at Dolgelly; we left the quaint old town without having explored a tithe of its beauties, and we left it with great regret, taking away with us many pleasant recollections of the place and its romantic surroundings. But we had much in Wales to see yet, and a good deal of England on our return journey home. So the next morning being fine, with a clear sky and a glorious sunshine overhead, we determined to make a start, as we felt, in spite of the attractions of Dolgelly, we could not afford to let such a grand day pass by without making another stage. Our destination for the night was the renowned valley of Festiniog, a vale far famed for the entrancing beauty of its scenery, and of which Lord Lyttelton says, 'With the woman one loves, with the friend of one's heart, and with a good study of books, one might pass an age in this

vale and think it a day.' Other writers, not a few, have lavished their encomiums on this spot; we were therefore doubly anxious to reach it in favourable weather, that we might have time and a proper opportunity of seeing the same, and exploring some, at least, of its lovely nooks. A few miles on our way, at Llanelltyd bridge, we pulled up the horses and looked back upon a glorious prospect of the valley along which we had been driving. Dolgelly was plainly visible, over which the grand old Cader Idris was keeping watch and ward like a silent, grim sentinel. Not very far from this spot are some veritable gold mines; gold mines in Great Britain! It is not everybody that knows such things exist in our own country, and what is more, are and have been profitably worked. Turning now to the left and ascending (ever since we entered Wales we had either been ascending or descending) up a charming valley we soon reached the inn and village of Tyn-y-groes, near which we took shelter from a heavy shower, under some trees which completely shielded us from the downpour, so thick and luxuriant was their foliage. The rain was of very short duration, the storm came on suddenly and ceased almost as suddenly; the only remarkable thing about it was, it appeared to come down from a cloudless sky. This somewhat strange phenomenon I have noticed once and only once before, and that was whilst journeying on a coach over a moorland country near Corwen. On that occasion a sudden shower came on lasting for a few minutes only, but heavy while it lasted, coming apparently out of a clear blue sky. My

companions at the time noticed the strange effect, and we all remarked upon it. I do not know whether this is a recognized meteorological fact or not, but I do know I have witnessed it. We got down from the phaeton to see some fine falls near here. Rhaiadr Du, the grandest of them, for there are three in all, is certainly a very beautiful cascade. It forms a perfect picture, and is worthy of being better known than it is. After leaving Tyn-y-groes the scenery became by degrees bleaker and bleaker, till at last almost all vegetation disappeared, and all around only a wild waste of uncultivable land was visible, covered with coarse heath and parched brown turf and various mosses.

Scattered all about were many rocks and stones, and beyond all was a background of bare mountains. The air was, however, deliciously bracing, and the country, though bleak, was to us most enjoyable from its very wildness, and the contrast it afforded to the town life we have perforce to submit to for the greater part of each year.

The road was as straight as a line, up and down it went for some eight miles or so, and it was about as rough a road as one could wish to travel over. Once only have I driven over a worse one, and that was in a stage coach over a mere track in California, an experience I never wish to repeat. Only two roads in England do I know to equal it; one is over Bowes Moor in Yorkshire, certainly a very bad one, and the other a road we struck whilst driving across country in North Devon, worse even, if possible, than the north country one. These roads will live for

ever in my memory. All the surface or metal of the present roadway had gone long ago, and now the bare rocks alone were left, the very bones of the world peeping up through the earth. The eight miles to Trawsvynydd—what a terrible name !—our first halting-place, took us a long while to drive. In due time, however, we reached the lonely and elevated town, which appears to be shut out from the world as completely as a place can possibly be, surrounded as it is in all directions by a wild stretch of dreary country, a specimen of which we had been made duly acquainted with. Rough as was our way we enjoyed the drive immensely. The grand effects of light and shade and the aërial perspective views over the spacious moorlands were wonderfully enchanting and fine; the colours, too, of the various weather-stained and bleached rocks and their coverings of never-dying mosses and lichens were of exquisite loveliness. Nature has everywhere some beauty to show, even in her most desolate regions, to those who will look for it. As Sterne says, 'I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba and say that all is barren.' Parallel with our road, and running nearly the whole way along with it, we could just trace the remains of the old Roman causeway, *Sarn Helen*, so called from the wife of the Emperor Maximus. It is raised some few feet above the general surface of the country, and is covered now with a coarse turf, and is from eight to ten yards broad. All about Trawsvynydd are the remains of Roman forts, and many old weapons, coins, urns, bricks, &c., of Roman origin have been

found, and a few cromlechs and cairns of the ancient Britons are still to be seen. It is sad to learn that without doubt all this barren country was once covered with rich forests of oak and other trees. Once thoroughly denuded of trees, land for ever after suffers. The refreshing springs dry up, the soil becomes parched, and barrenness and desolation take the place of plenty. Of course trees may be replanted, and with care, but not without, in generations to come the soil may become fertile once again. But who amongst us will plant and tend, with no hope of any return in a lifetime, trees for the benefit of posterity ?

Out of Trawsvynydd the road maintained much of the same inhospitable character, till we neared our destination, when all was changed. We had been beholding nature in her wildest and loneliest mood, such desolate scenes might even have disgusted an anchorite ; but now all was luxuriant and beautiful. From a spot where we rested our horses we had a charming panoramic view of the famous and fairylike vale of Festiniog. A glorious prospect was spread out before us, and our admiration was as unstinting as it was deserved. Here, at our feet, was a rich woodland valley with forest-shadowed slopes, aslant and adown which the golden sunshine shone ; a valley wide enough to be cheerful, though not too broad to lose its vale-like character. The dale was musical with falling waters, and a fair-sized river ran along it, half-hidden here and there by mysterious shadows, and anon shining forth in silvery brightness. We gazed

on this peaceful, restful, dreamlike scene for some time, and then hastened to descend into such a world of beauty.

We had to inquire our way here, for some new roads we found had been constructed since our maps were published, and consequently they, as well as our road-book, were at fault. But unfortunately the only human being about spoke no English. We shouted Tan-y-Bwlch, being the name of the village where we hoped to find quarters for the night. We were directed by the aforesaid native to go through some gates and past what appeared to be a private lodge, into a road overhung with sombre foliage. Fancying this must surely be the way to some gentleman's house and grounds we repeated our query, and the reply came, 'Tan-y-Bwlch,' with a nod and a word that sounded to us like yar, which we concluded meant yes. So we proceeded onwards, feeling if we were wrong we could but turn back. The road turned out to be a long, steep, and continuous descent into the vale through quite a bosky dell; to the right of us was a deep chasm or ravine, overhung with many trees, and far, far down we could hear, but could not see, a torrent seething and roaring along its rocky bed. On and on we drove, descending fast the while, expecting every minute to come across the house, till at last the road took a sudden turn and revealed to us another lodge and entrance-gate; this was opened for us by a charming wee Welsh damsel with a smile, for which she received payment, and there right before us was Tan-y-Bwlch, with the pleasant-looking Oakeley

Arms Hotel, all basking in the hot noon's sun. We found we had come across one of the old-fashioned comfortable and commodious inns of the pre-railway times; the landlady took an interest in her guests, and altogether we found here a home from home, and that, I take it, is the highest praise you can give an hotel.

It was an intensely hot evening after a still warmer day, and we sat in the garden, enjoying the glorious view from thence, and we wondered if in all the wide world there was another such a peaceful lovely spot. Surely this must be the landscape artist's paradise! We stole some deliciously ripe fruit from some beds we discovered near our seat, and which we much enjoyed. Of course it was very wrong to steal currants and strawberries, but then the fresh-growing, luscious-looking fruit almost asked us to pluck it and taste. The temptation was too great.

The road we had come down by, we learnt from the ostler, had been only recently made by some local gentleman, who, with the usual liberality of such people, most courteously and kindly allowed private carriages the use of it. It had been constructed to avoid the excessively steep and somewhat dangerous descent of the old main road. He then told us of a melancholy accident that had happened to a coach in 1864 on this latter road. It appears that whilst the conveyance was coming down the hill with a load of some eighteen persons, the skid broke, the carriage ran on the horses, of course the driver was helpless and lost all control

over his team, the consequence being the coach was dashed against a wall and upset. Result—five passengers killed and the rest much shaken and injured; not a bad total for a railway collision. This is a specimen of one of those accidents that appears to me, with ordinary prudence and forethought, might have been prevented. Why was there not a safety-chain on one of the wheels? Skids may give way, and often do, just when their services are most requisite, but with a safety-chain on, so that it might come into action in case of a mishap to the skid, the accident would probably have never taken place. One great principle in doing anything is, never to leave anything to chance; there is too much trusting to luck in the world. Of course there is a certain amount of risk and chance in everything, but all precautions should be taken to reduce such risk and chance to a minimum.

We found the Oakeley Arms to be such comfortable quarters that we decided to remain on there a few days, and to inspect at our leisure the surroundings of the place. Our first visit was to see, not nature's but some of man's handiwork. It was to the little Festiniog railway, which ran along the top of the hill by the side of our hotel. This railroad is of only 2 feet gauge, and has curves of a couple of chains' radius! It was originally a tramway line and worked by horses, but Mr. Spooner, C.E., determined, in spite of the protests and apprehensions of other engineers, to adopt steam for a locomotive power. The line runs from Portmadoc to Festiniog,

at which latter place there are large slate quarries. It winds and twists in an extraordinary and alarming manner in and out amongst the mountains, now by the sides of awful-looking precipices, now through deep cuttings, and again through miniature tunnels in everything but length. As the road has a steady incline up, or perhaps it will be clearer to say a steady decline all the way down to Portmadoc, the whole train therefore, composed generally of numerous slate-ladened trucks and a few passenger carriages, is impelled by its own gravitation on its downward journey. In the days before steam, horses pulled up the empty slate waggons, and in return were placed in trucks and thus carried down again—a very ingenious and labour-saving arrangement.

Our next ramble was to view some very fine falls situated about two or three miles from our hotel. We had some trouble in finding these, even after we had discovered the stream which came from them, as owing to its precipitous banks we could not follow it up. We had a stiff climb along a rough mountain track, and a scramble through several thickets, and some hard pushing through a good deal of entangled underwood, but when at last we came upon the object of our search, we felt we were more than rewarded for all our labours. We discovered that there were two falls, both being exceedingly interesting. One is called the Black Cataract, though certainly it has not earned its name from the colour of the stream ; the other the Raven Fall. The former of these plunges over a huge cliff, at the top of which three jutting rocks divide the water into three sepa-

rate falls, the effect of which is very fine. The Raven Fall makes a lovely picture; it is in fact of its kind a perfect scene, being both extremely grand and impressive, and at the same time very beautiful. It consists of a series of cascades, a gleaming, seething mass of broken waters coming grandly down between precipitous walls of rocks profusely garnished with ivy and lichens, the whole being overshadowed by luxuriant woods.

We literally revelled in the endless beauties of this wonderful valley; but they are more beauties to be seen than described. Nature here has been inexhaustibly lavish of her gifts, but nevertheless there is no sameness anywhere. All is varied. Here is a bosky glen, and there a torrent surging down a mighty gorge; here a quiet pebbly stream, making soft music as it glides along between its ferny and moss-covered banks, which in their turn are overhung with many tangled briars. And again, there is the tranquil, peaceful river, with many a silent reedy pool wherein the speckled trout abound, and anon are many shady woods affording cool and secluded wanderings. Then there are projecting and weather-worn and tinted crags of bold and fantastic shapes, the colours of the rocks being always fine. These project forth here and there from richly-wooded hillsides, breaking any monotony there might have been in the scene. And, to complete the whole, there is over all a grand panorama of boldly-shaped and rugged mountains, the fine outline of which contrasts most pleasingly with the nearer scenery. But it is labour almost lost

to attempt to describe what is hardly describable either by pen or pencil, or even by both combined. A master hand alone can do it.

Our next stage we decided should be to Beddgelert—'sweet Beddgelert where the martyr-hound doth lie.' The drive was a glorious one. We had, however, one nasty bit on the way. At one place our road on one hand was totally unprotected, having no wall or fence of any kind, and it ran alongside a steep precipice, had we gone over which, certainly this book would never have been written; on the other was the toy railway just above us. It was a disagreeable corner to take at the best of times, even without the railway. Fortunately, no train came by as we passed the spot, or we might have been placed in real peril. As we proceeded on our way a magnificent panorama of various mountains rose up before us, Snowdon, like a huge giant, towering over all. Amongst the number, one peak, that of Cynicht, was very noticeable, resembling as it does (in miniature of course) the world-renowned Matterhorn. Alpine Club men will, no doubt, protest against any resemblance. Of course Cynicht is a mere pigmy to the mighty Swiss peak, but otherwise, both in shape and outline, there is a marked likeness; although some people have cynically remarked that only those who have never been at Zermatt see it.

A pleasant drive of some two hours or so brought us to the well-known Pont Aberglaslyn. This bridge has been written about, painted, sketched, engraved, and photographed times without end. It consists of a single arch springing from

rock to rock, and is surrounded by scenery of considerable grandeur, and is certainly a very romantic spot. But exactly why this especial bit of Wales should have become so renowned and have received so much laudation, whilst many other equally attractive spots, quite as beautiful and romantic, are almost entirely neglected or unknown, is somewhat of a puzzle, unless it be, indeed, that Pont Aberglaslyn, being on a high road and close to Beddgelert, is easily accessible to the general tourist. Perhaps, too, the guide-books, which repeat each other parrot fashion, and rave about the unsurpassed beauties of the place, may have a deal to do with it, for to a numerous class of tourists—too numerous alas!—what the guide-book says is gospel.

I do not wish for one moment to detract from the beauties of the locality; these, like good wine, need no bush; but I agree with Charles Kingsley that 'the spot has been overpraised.' It may be that the many encomiums lavished upon the bridge and pass caused us to be disappointed by unduly raising our expectations. To come suddenly and unexpectedly upon a scene of great natural beauty, without having heard of or anticipated it, is the best way thoroughly to appreciate the same and value it at its full worth. Leaving the Pont, we entered upon a fine mountain ravine, with wild steep hills on either side of us. There was just room, and only just, for our road and an impetuous torrent, which chafed and foamed amongst the boulders and rocks that in places checked its wanton course. We continued on our way,

Between walls
Of shadowy granite in a gleaming pass,

to Beddgelert. We drove up to the Goat Hotel here amidst a general bustle of arriving and departing coaches, with tourists, sportsmen, fishermen, and all their countless impedimenta. We had hardly got safely under shelter when a severe thunderstorm broke forth : the rain fell in torrents, and the thunder echoed and re-echoed amongst the nearer and distant mountains, leaping from peak to peak in a truly terrific manner. The tempest was short and severe, and was all over by the evening, and was succeeded by a deep tranquillity ; the sky once more was clear, and only distant rumblings, the freshness of the air, and the wet roads, told of the past downpour.

The stars one by one peeped out, fleecy clouds alone were visible, and presently the moon coyly showed herself. We could not stay indoors upon such a night—what was the damp grass to us? Surely it would be a shame to neglect so romantic an hour to visit Gelert's grave. So we went, and stood by the side of the few rails that mark the spot where tradition says the faithful hound now rests. We would not enquire with sceptical spirit whether the story was true or not : enough for us to have the tradition ; we were content to believe it so. We all know the touching legend how Llewelyn the Great, returning home one day from hunting, was met by his favourite hound with great manifestations of joy and delight, but observing the dog's jaws were covered with blood, he became alarmed and rushed indoors. Finding there his child's cradle overturned, and stains

of blood about, he at once concluded the hound had murdered his infant :—

'Hell-hound, my child's by thee devoured !'
The frantic father cried,
And to the hilt his vengeful sword
He plunged in Gelert's side.

Aroused by Gelert's dying yell,
Some slumberer 'wakened nigh ;
What words the parent's joy could tell,
To hear his infant's cry ?

Concealed beneath a trampled heap,
His hurried search had missed,
All glowing from his rosy sleep,
The cherub boy he kissed.

Nor scathe had he, nor harm, nor dread,
But the same couch beneath
Lay a gaunt wolf, all torn and dead,
Tremendous still in death.

It is a touching history, and deserves to be true. The prince, so continues the tradition, was so affected by the sad incident, that he buried his favourite with his own hands, and caused to be erected over him a worthy monument. Hence the name of the village, Bedd-Gelert (Beddgelert), the grave of Gelert, bedd being the restful Welsh word for the tomb. There is an ancient proverb, much used in Wales even to this day, and which may possibly refer to the above history. It is as follows : 'The man repents as much as the one who killed his dog.'

A glorious morning with cool refreshing breezes, and a bright, warm, but not too hot sunshine over-

head tempted us to make an early start. Our road to-day was up the Gwynant valley to Pen-y-gwryd, and from there down the wild and famous pass of Llanberis to the village of that name, where we intended resting for the night,—a drive so full of both beauty and grandeur, as to make any lover of scenery's mouth water. All day we were journeying under the very shadow of the mighty Snowdon. Almost at once on leaving Beddgelert the thoroughly Welsh character of the scenery manifested itself. To the left of our road rose tier upon tier of majestic mountain slopes, well wooded at the foot, but gradually getting bleaker and bleaker till the tops were lost in misty clouds. On the other side was a rocky river—is there anything in nature, I wonder, more beautiful than a Welsh mountain river? How it leaps and frets along its rocky bed, now making cascade after cascade, now urging its way past many an opposing boulder, tumbling and swirling from ledge to ledge, making bubbles and milk-white foam. How glorious, too, are the colours of its restless waters! here in shadowy pool a rich transparent amber, there a raw sienna as it breaks over some half-hidden rocks, varied with tints of opal where the light catches the feathery spray, and anon it sparkles and splashes like countless diamonds as the sunbeams glance down upon it. Thus it journeys on its gladsome way, eddying and whirling, splashing and foaming; presently it is quieter for a while, as it ripples over a stony and pebbly shallow; then soon once more it resumes its dancing and sportive ways, full of life, full of beauty, never for a moment dull or

sluggish. The very sound of its waters is full of gladness ; I can liken it only to merry peals of childish laughter. Eye, and ear, and heart are pleased: the eye by all that is delightful ; the ear by the joyous musical cadence—no suspicion of sadness is there ; the heart by its pureness. For, owing to the slaty and hard rocky soil through which they flow, Welsh rivers, even after the heaviest rains, are seldom turbid or discoloured, as is the case generally with mountain streams.

An old ruined mill, with its silent, motionless water-wheel, doubtless of erst so busy, stood on the opposite side of the river, the hoary old walls of which were stained and weatherbeaten into many tints, the dilapidated roof being garnished with mosses and lichens. Crossing the stream to this was one of those quaint rude structures doing duty for bridges, so picturesque and dear to artists, peculiar, as far as I know, to the Principality, and to be found nowhere else. The piers of the bridge are rude erections of unwrought stones, guiltless of mortar or cement, and maintaining their stability solely by their massiveness and weight ; these support a timber structure on which the road or pathway runs. The mill is backed by some bent and gnarled old trees that must have a severe struggle to exist, having no shelter from the inclement gales, but which have successfully outlived the storms of ages, looking even now defiant and as though determined to brave the winter winds for ages still to come. Beyond these a peep up the valley reveals in its more sheltered nooks forests of

birch and ash, and oaks and firs, and over these mighty serrated peaks arise.

This ruined mill and bridge and river, with the bold amphitheatre of crags and mountains beyond, what a poem do they not make! How often have they not formed the subjects of pictures in our London exhibitions! They have been painted times without end, and yet, somehow, one never grows weary of them. Year after year you may see on the walls of the various galleries, taken from different points of view, and in as many different ways—in sunshine and storm, in grey gloom and sunset glory, on paper and canvas—this precious bit of Wales. The landscape painter need not travel abroad to find subjects worthy of his brush.

Further on the road we came across a remarkable insulated rocky prominence called Dinas Enrys. Merlin the bard and seer is connected with this singular spot by many of his wonderful doings. This isolated hill, too, was fortified by the famous British prince Vortigern, who retreated here from the vengeance of his countrymen. Remains of his fortifications are still to be seen on the summit. It is said that Merlin here read to the unfortunate monarch the secrets of the skies, and soothed the unlucky king by his auspicious predictions.

A few miles further and we came upon Lyn-y-ddinas, a small and beautiful lake surrounded by the grandest scenery. It was a rare gem placed in a rough setting. A peaceful, graceful sheet of water, from whose shores buttresses of gigantic mountains

abruptly rose. We saw a solitary boat upon the lake, with a fisherman busily whipping its surface; with the usual result, as far as our watching was concerned, —'much cry and little wool.' The scenery now, if possible, grew finer and finer every mile of the way. In the immediate valley where we were, trees and shrubs flourished exceedingly, growing luxuriantly even; and moss-covered rocks and trickling streams abounded, with here and there a flowery mead; but ahead of us stupendous mountain masses arose, one above another, culminating in the frowning peak of Snowdon, his dark forbidding-looking summit appearing grand in the extreme.

Presently we came upon another lake, Llyn Gwynant, of about a mile long and about a quarter of a mile wide. Just as we came in sight of the same the road took an awkward bend, and as is usual in such cases, we sounded our horn, and were delighted and surprised to discover a magnificent echo, altogether perhaps one of the finest we had ever heard. Across the lake the mountains rose precipitously, and it was these that first caught the notes of the horn and repeated them to other hills, till they gradually died away in the far-off distance. We were so struck with this echo that we pulled up here and sounded several loud blasts upon our horn. The effect was marvellous. It was as though we were in an enemy's country and the watchmen from the different heights near and far away were giving to one another the alarm. It was wonderful to hear the echo repeating itself and resounding from crag to distant hill, and from hill to far-off mountain,

till, getting fainter and fainter, we could trace the wandering sound no longer.

The side of the lake we were on was very beautiful, overhung as it was with quivering aspen and fragrant hawthorn, and various other trees, and with a pebbly shore upon which the miniature waves lapped lazily and lovingly. The other side, lying at the very foot of Snowdon as it does, was of a very different character. The majestic precipices of that stern mountain descend almost directly (some 2,000 feet or more) to the still margin of the lake.

> Abrupt and sheer the mountains sink
> *At once* upon the level brink.

These mighty cliffs and towering crags of crystalline rock give a solemn and terrific grandeur to the scene, out of all proportion to their actual height, though they are high enough. The wall or rampart of the monarch mountain is here simply stupendous—no other word will express the fact. You have to crane your head to an unpleasant angle to see the sky line of those heaven-soaring peaks. There are no soft rounded summits here; all is sharp, serrated, and hard, telling plainly of the fierce battle of the elements in the ages of long ago, the fearful struggle of contending forces there must have been to have caused and wrought such mighty precipices, peaks, and pinnacles. Even to this day some writers of repute maintain that water and glaciers are solely accountable for all this, their theory being that the valleys, and consequently peaks and mountains, have all been cut out by the erosive effects of water

and the carving and grinding power of glaciers, which has left them much as they now are. How, with the evidences before them so plainly written in Nature's book, any person can still be found to defend the theory of watery geology against that of volcanic agency, I cannot understand. Snowdon, Cader Idris, and other surrounding mountains are but the remnants of gigantic volcanoes, the eruptive forces of which can be traced far and wide. The cones of these craters must have been larger than Etna. Cader Idris is capped with lava, the ashbeds of which peak are over 2,000 feet thick. The higher portions of Snowdon are nothing but tremendous sheets of lava interspersed with crags of hard blue crystalline rock. This mountain lies about the centre of the active Welsh volcanoes of the Caradoc age, the ashbeds from which centre reach as far as the remote Bala lake, and are especially thick in the nearer Dolwyddelan valley. This proves volcanic action of the most stupendous sort, compared to which the mightiest efforts of the same kind in recent times are as mere infant's play; these forces have raised the mountains and formed the peaks we now behold. The valleys, passes, and ravines were doubtless first caused by the cooling and contracting of the molten and heated matter, assisted very possibly by earthquakes and other convulsions of nature in those prehistoric and not-much-to-be-envied times. Then came the age of the glaciers, which took to the valleys they found formed as their natural channels, carving them a little deeper and wider perhaps, and smoothing the rough rugged

rocks in places. Traces of their workmanship in this direction are still to be seen, but in my opinion doing comparatively very little else, and in no way changing or affecting the disposition of matter to any appreciable extent. Then came the denuding and erosive power of water, since the silence or death of the volcanoes, the most potent of all powers, and for ever and always at work, weathering the mountain sides, and cutting channels for itself; in places of considerable depth and width, but small always compared to the greatness of its surroundings. Such appears to me to be in brief the past history of this portion of the world's surface, reasoning in the boldest manner and by a strange analogy. My telescope reveals to me the lunar mountain ranges, hills, precipices, and valleys. Our satellite, we know, has no water, and probably no atmosphere; consequently in it there can be no weathering of rocks or so-called water-worn valleys. Those that exist must be due to volcanic action. Yet many of the peaked lunar mountains and valleys, or ravines, which without doubt are volcanic, remind me much of the terrestrial Welsh ones. It may seem an astonishingly daring thing to do, amounting almost to presumption, to think even of comparing the scenery of a distant world, never less than 240,000 miles away, to a portion of our own. And yet it is easily done, and to me it proves that volcanic agency has sufficed to cause, there at any rate, the various hills and valleys. And the moon, possibly, now somewhat represents the appearance Wales did in the far off Caradoc age.

The truly awfully grand scenery of our satellite, with its wonderful mountain peaks, volcanoes, extensive plains, valleys, hills, and terrific precipices are to be seen, and the wonderful landscape effects realized, by the owner of even a moderately-sized telescope—provided it is a good one. Mine, possessing a three and a quarter inch lens, by Wray, shows them splendidly, and will bear a power of 300 on the planet. Moonland is a country the scenery of which is worth a visit—by telescope of course.

At the further end of Llyn Gwynant the road suddenly began to rise, and it continued to ascend for some few miles. It was a stiff climb all the way, and dead collar-work for the horses. But it was a splendid road and magnificently engineered through a most difficult country. Surely this must have been some of Telford's work. Up and up we went; far below us we saw the narrow ancient track, now all forsaken and grass-grown. Poor old road, inconvenient as thou art, had we been walking instead of driving, we would have preferred your picturesque though uneven way. We passed many a leaping stream, dashing across and under our path, and at one of these overhung with trees we rested and washed our steeds' mouths out with the water, which, with a handful or two of short sweet grass, refreshed them much. At last, after some two or three miles of hill work, we came to the hostelrie of Pen-y-Gwryd, a lonely wayside inn, supposed to be the highest hotel in Wales. This is a famous house in the midst of a desolate and

bleak country. Not a human habitation, or any work of human hands (save the roads), is to be seen anywhere around. It is situated upon an elevated plateau of dark, peaty, moss-covered moorland, all boulder-strewn, intersected by innumerable dark brown streams, and dominated by the bare flanks of the Glyder Fawr and other mountains, whose summits are generally hid in clouds, and whose sides are scarred by the weathering of ages and gullied with countless torrents. A glorious spot it is for pedestrians, there being boundless space and unlimited freedom all around.

Many famous men, literary, scientific, political, and otherwise, have spent their vacations and holidays here, enjoying the wonderful scenery and the startling change from the busy, restless town life, and I may add city atmosphere. Here they have indulged in the perfect relaxation from head-work of the hard muscular exercise of scrambling over monster boulders, mounting crags and various sky-soaring peaks, and fording rocky streams and making sundry famous ascents, to say nothing of trout-fishing and sketching.

We saw here a solitary goat browsing on the mountain side, all alone. It was the first we had seen in the land of goats, and it proved to be the last; goats seem to be about as great a rarity in Wales at the present day as the chamois is in Switzerland.

We had a fine view back from here of the valley through which we had been travelling, and I made a panoramic sketch of the same. It was in

this vale that Wilson the R.A. found most of the subjects for his landscapes, and truly, an artist might paint there for ever and a day, and not exhaust a tithe of the many beauties of the spot.

No better place than Pen-y-Gwryd could anywhere be found in which to rest the overwrought brain. Though naturally a somewhat misty and wet quarter, for the hills around are great cloud-catchers, the breezes are invigorating and bracing, and what matters a wetting to the hardy mountaineer? It would be difficult to find a wilder, a more remote or solitary spot in Great Britain, though you hunted ever so,—a spot away from railways, where morning papers are unknown, and where telegrams cease to worry and annoy.

We baited the horses here, and warmed ourselves inside before a glorious fire in Mrs. Owen's kitchen, for it was raw and cold on this elevated site, although it was midsummer.

We found on enquiry from our worthy host the cause of the scarcity of goats. It appears these mischievous animals are very partial to the bark of trees, which they nibble with avidity; consequently they damage or kill all the young timber to which they may gain access. Landlords therefore naturally object to them. Their depredations and the damage they cause are too heavy a discount to set against their picturesque and romantic appearance upon the hill-sides.

CHAPTER IX.

Gorphwysfa—Through Llanberis Pass in a Thunderstorm—A Natural Cromlech—Dolbadarn Tower—The Chamonix of Wales—Snowdon—Waterfall of Ceunant Mawr—Spoiling Scenery—A Dreadful Catastrophe—Carnarvon Castle and Town—The 'George' at Bangor—Menai Straits—A Wonderful Echo—Telford's Suspension Bridge—A Dull Watering-Place—Magnificent Mountain Panorama—Beaumaris Castle—Moss Troopers—Anglesey Column—The Britannia Tubular Bridge.

HIGH up though we were at the inn at Pen-y-Gwryd, we had still a stiff climb of a mile or more before we reached the top of Llanberis Pass, down which ran our road. Here we found a small house with a notice-board offering refreshments for sale, and a tumble-down cottage or two occupied by guides, higher even than the elevated hostelrie we had left. This spot is very appropriately called Gorphwysfa, or the Resting-Place; one would need to rest after all the mounting necessary to reach it. We involuntarily pulled up our horses here, struck by the awful magnificence of the scene before us. From our point of observation we had a direct view all down the gloomy pass. It was like the very entrance to Hades. Above us were dark, lowering clouds which joined cliff to cliff together overhead like a gigantic roof, and which threatened us every moment with a deluge; the thunder rolled and resounded from crag to crag in an alarming manner, and all before us

was a dismal, mysterious darkness, down and into which we plunged, having taken the precaution to make all taut and weatherproof. The wind blew in fitful gusts, driving and dashing large raindrops into our faces, all of which foreboded a heavy storm. And we were glad it was so. Blue sky and sunshine would have taken away the grandeur and awe-inspiring effect of the scene. Llanberis Pass is the very home of storms, and it was meet we should see the place in its wanton aspect. Down we drove into the blinding mass of rain and wreathing mists. How to describe that four miles of wild, weird, stone-strewn waste I know not. It appears to owe its existence (the watery geologists notwithstanding) to some tremendous convulsion of nature that has torn and rent the mighty mountains of the Snowdon range asunder and formed this and other narrow and wall-like ravines in those far-off days when volcanoes were a power in the land. On either side of us were monster precipices of an almost perpendicular height, scarred all over, and blasted and rent with many jagged fissures. At the foot of these, and strewed in endless confusion along the valley, and all over the same, were shattered fragments of rock, fallen ruins from the overhanging cliffs above, with mighty boulders everywhere :

> Crags, stones, and mounds confusedly hurled,
> The fragments of an earlier world.

Through all this wild scene our road was carried. Down the centre of the pass, thundering in its rage, was a roaring torrent ; and at times, when it

struggled fiercely with the opposing boulders in its blind fury, it almost drowned the noise of the warring elements overhead.

It was truly a scene of awful magnificence. What the pass might appear like in the peaceful sunshine, not having seen it under such circumstances, I cannot say. As we saw it, wrestling with the whirlwind and the storm, it appeared to us indeed a weird and gloomy-looking spot, a scene of horrid grandeur. The howling and screeching of the wind amongst the rocks and boulders sounded unearthly, and more like the wails of lost spirits or demons condemned to dwell for ever in this dismal vale, and would escape but that stern mighty barriers held them prisoners. Destitute of any human dwelling, bare and bleak, with no signs of life save the leaping cataracts, it was as though a doom or some dreadful curse had fallen on this blighted region. I never have witnessed a more impressive scene. If I could, I would not care to see the spot otherwise than I did, for fear of spoiling the impression I have of Llanberis, 'Pass of Storm.' The black clouds hid all the mountain summits; they might have been ten thousand feet high for all we could tell. The thunder rolled, the rain came down more fiercely than ever, and all around us the torrents raged and roared and foamed. From out of the clouds, from the lightning-riven peaks on all sides they descended, white in their wrath, and looking like falling milk against the dark rocks. How they hissed as they struck the sides of the cliffs, and seethed in the boiling cauldrons they

formed below! From every crevice in the rocky walls they came, sending columns of vapour upwards, like so much smoke, from where they struck the rocks beneath them. One or two, we noticed, came down from such a height that, having to contend solely with the resistance of the air and the storm-blasts, they were converted into spray before they reached the ground. Such was our experience of Llanberis Pass.

About half-way down we noticed a so-called cromlech-stone, a spot where, we afterwards learned, an old body known by the name of Hetty took up her abode. What a terrible place to vegetate in! One could hardly call such an existence living. The title is, however, a misnomer. It is merely a gigantic piece of rock that has been hurled down from the heights above, and has so fallen on other fragments as to resemble a huge cromlech. As we neared the end of the pass so we left the storm behind us; the sky was still dark overhead, and the clouds remained resting on the mountain summits. The rain continued falling the while, but ahead of us we could see and feel the bright sunlight, and presently we emerged from out the gloomy vale into quite a different world. Our wraps and waterproofs were thrown aside, and we revelled in the warm sunshine. Dolbadarn tower now came into view, an ancient circular British stronghold, picturesquely situated on a jutting promontory, with the lake of Llyn Peris at its foot and the misty distant hills beyond. We drove up to the Victoria Hotel here (we were now at the village

of Llanberis), and had the pleasure of learning that the sun had been shining brightly here all day, whilst we, a few miles away, were being drenched in the gloomy pass.

Llanberis is the Chamonix of Wales, with Snowdon in place of Mount Blanc. There are the guides and the parties all prepared for the ascent. A number were returning when we arrived, looking very moist and very tired ; we feared they had not had a very successful climb. However, in mountaineering, as in war, there is a certain amount of risk to be run, and luck counts for something. We found capital stables at the Victoria, with loose boxes for our horses, so we determined to rest over a day here. Early next morning the space in front of our hotel was filled with numerous parties, guides, and ponies, all getting ready for the ascent. There was a good deal of noise and bustle, and everybody looked very excited and happy, although Snowdon was still wearing his nightcap. Our man obtained permission to accompany one of these parties, and he went on his way rejoicing ; however, as he afterwards told us, on arriving at the summit he found it all in murky gloom, with a thick, damp, chilly mist, and consequently, of course, no view. He waited for an hour or so, feeling desperately cold the while, when, thinking he had had about enough of it, he descended in despair. Hardly had he arrived at the foot of the mountain than the clouds cleared away, as though by magic, and the peak remained clear for the rest of the day. Moral : It is not always the early bird that catches the worm.

We were sorry for his disappointment, but at the same time pleased we were not tempted to make the ascent, for we should have had all our trouble and labour for nothing. We employed our time more profitably and more enjoyably by making a very effective sketch of Dolbadarn Tower, with the lake reflecting the old castle in the foreground, and with the cloud-capped Snowdon bringing up the rear. Dolbadarn Tower has a history and a tradition; both, however, too long to relate here. It is an interesting specimen of an early British stronghold, a very few of which are now extant, and is of great and unknown antiquity. Possibly of no great extent, compared, at least, to such castles as Carnarvon and Conway, these fortresses consisted probably, or chiefly, at any rate, of one strong main tower or donjon keep, with outlying works of some strength. They appear, at least in my opinion, principally built to defend the mountain passes, and seem to be designed to assist in the natural defence of such places, as much or more than to act as simple fortresses. This castle was held for many years by Llewelyn the Great, who kept his unfortunate brother Owen, surnamed the Red Prince, who had plotted against him, a prisoner for over twenty years in solitary confinement. Those must have been disagreeable times to live in for kings and princes who made unsuccessful war.

In the evening we made an excursion in search of the waterfall of Ceunant Mawr, *anglicè*, the 'Great Chasm.' We discovered it after a most delightful scramble along a rocky glen. It proved to

be a grand fall, situated at the head of a precipitous gorge; it descends for over sixty feet, being turned curiously aslant when on its downward way by the formation of the rocks, making this a characteristic and unique cascade. We watched it as it plunged down the dark recess into a boiling pool below, sending up the white showers of silvery spray, which with the light foam glowed with prismatic colours, as it caught the reflected light of the setting sun. We returned to our hotel well pleased with our ramble, and wandered by the lake's peaceful shore in the still gloaming, watching till the moon arose, and silvered o'er with her soft light the tarns, the ruined tower, and the dim mountains beyond, which appeared vaguely vast in the uncertain light. We sat and watched by the solitary mouldering tower till cool, grey mists arose, and a distant chime warned us it was time to take our rest. One advantage of the evening light was that it hid from our view—or rather, perhaps, I should say it disguised—the ugly slate quarries on the other side of the lake, which are, alas! successfully doing their best to irretrievably spoil a lovely spot.

The next day we made an early start for Bangor, Carnarvon being our half-way resting-place. The first portion of our road to this town, some eight miles or so, though doubtless very beautiful and much more fertile as regards soil, compared to the country we had been used to for some time past, appeared to us tame and uninteresting. It was on this road that the awful catastrophe occurred in 1869. It appears that two carts laden with dynamite,

going over a rough portion of the way, suddenly exploded, killing drivers and horses and destroying everything around. Five men were killed by this sad mishap. The terrific explosion was heard for miles, and of those in charge, horses, carts, and all, not a vestige was left; only a few mangled remains, blown into shreds, were found here and there. The roadway was torn up, and immense holes, some ten feet square, were rent out of the same. Not an agreeable road altogether to travel on, with the fair chance of meeting a load of nitro-glycerine at any corner, liable to be exploded at any moment. It is a pity such a powerful and so destructive an agent is necessary for mining purposes. As long as it is used accidents will occur from time to time, more or less serious.

Carnarvon is a very ancient town, and maintains to this day an old-world look. The castle is, of course, the chief attraction of the place, and a magnificent and stately pile it is, one half being proudly placed on the margin of the town, the other being washed by the restless ocean. Wales possesses many a noble pile, but Carnarvon Castle excels them all. It is the grandest and most magnificent ruin in Great Britain. As a relic of the old feudal times, it is second to none. Europe has only one that can at all compare with it. We Englishmen hardly appreciate at their worth the wonders and beauties of our native land. We travel on the Continent, and express surprise and delight at what we see there, often having left unvisited and all unknown the many treasures of our own lovely island. Truly,

this is not as it should be. I have met travellers exclaiming at the beauties of the Rhine, who, when I questioned them, forsooth, I found were ignorant of their own country, knowing nothing of the charms of the Dart, or the romantic scenery of the Clyde, with its mountains, lochs, and seascapes. The Kyles of Bute and many other such places were *terra incognita* to them. Some of these are at least equal, in a scenic point of view, and in parts far grander than anything the German river can show. What is there in the Rhine to approach in romantic beauty or grandeur the sail along the Clyde from Greenock, and up 'the Kyles' to Lochgilphead, and so on to Oban? Nothing! But to return to our castle (certainly Wales is the country *par excellence* of old castles). This kingly pile of Carnarvon is worthy of its builder, the mighty Edward, and worthy too of its accomplished architect, Henry de Elreton. Its wealth of magnificence culminates in the famous Eagle tower, which proudly dominates the whole structure. Tradition says that in a small apartment in this portion of the castle the first (Saxon, of course) Prince of Wales was born, though why the smallest and gloomiest room should have been selected for this auspicious event I know not; nor do I care, nor does it matter, for in this case tradition has to go to the wall. As a writer in 'Notes and Queries' some time ago remarked, 'The Eagle tower was not built till long after the prince was born, and he was not created Prince of Wales till he was in his eighteenth year.'

Externally the castle is entire; internally, unfor-

tunately, it is not in such a good state of preservation. The entrance between two massive and square flanking towers is most imposing; over this a carved stone, and unfortunately much dilapidated, figure of its founder, King Edward, is placed. He is represented, warrior like, with his hand upon his sword, watching over and guarding, as it were, the noble monument of his lordly power. There were in past times four portcullises here, and in all respects this stronghold was most complete, and in the days before gunpowder, and when cannons were unknown, it must have been from its strength, if properly garrisoned, for it is a vast place, almost impregnable.

The towers, of which there are many (thirteen in all), are remarkable by being multangular, and not rounded like Conway, and most other old feudal fortresses. These towers vary, too, in the number of their sides.

The walls enclose an area of over three acres; they are of immense thickness and strength, and are all built of cut stone; no rubble, as was used in some ancient castles, was allowed in this kingly pile. We peered through the narrow slits provided for the archers, but found the field of view very limited, and wondered how they could use such apertures with the deadly effect they did. We wondered, too, at many things. Oh! if only one of the grim and gallant warriors of Edward's time could arise from his grave, all clad in mail, and if but for one short hour we could turn time backwards, and behold the old castle as it was in its glory, in the brave days of old. And if only that doughty knight would take

us over and explain everything! Ah! if only—what a deal there is in those three little words! As what we wished for was impossible, we tried in our mind's eye to picture the stern old warriors inhabiting this stately pile; we endeavoured to bring before us the military life and economy of the days so long departed. There was the lonely sentinel pacing backwards and forwards, keeping watch and ward from his high turret over the land his monarch held with such an iron grasp. Then came before us a company of archers skilled and bold, and all ready for the fray; but alas! we only partially succeeded in our attempt; the past and present were not in harmony. A party were making their way over the ruins, and at the sight of them our poetic visions fled. Tweed suits and deer-stalkers, and pretty girlish faces, accompanied by merry peals of laughter, and, worst of all, a distant railway whistle, brought us suddenly back to the stern reality of the present.

From Carnarvon to Bangor the road was a pleasant one, though without any particular features. Here and there it ran along by the side of the railway, and we were pleased to discover some consideration is shown in this part of the world for the humble traveller by road, as everywhere, where required, we found for a protection a good high wall was erected. This is as it should be, and if it were always done, I would never complain of the railways running so perilously near the highways as they do in places. Even with the precaution of an intervening wall, the sudden sound of a rushing express train is quite enough for restless horses to contend

with, and for the nerves of the driver, unless he be an accomplished and fearless whip.

We drove up to the 'George' at Bangor. Who does not know that comfortable hostelrie, so famous for honeymooners? How beautifully it is situated, facing the Menai Straits, with gardens sloping down to the water! And what glorious prospects there are from it over sea and land; and, not least of all, of Telford's magnificent suspension bridge, 'the magic bridge of Bangor, hung awful in the sky.' The hotel has recently been enlarged—I will not add improved, for in my opinion the contrary is the case, it having lost much of its quaint, old, cosy look. Still, take it for all in all, a wanderer in search of good, old-fashioned comfort might go farther and fare much worse.

In the evening we rambled about the inn garden, and watched the setting sun going down in a luminous expanse of glowing orange, against which the purple-grey hills of Anglesey stood boldly forth. The Straits at our feet were a mass of gleaming gold, out of which dimly loomed the ships as they went down and across the moving waters.

In one corner of the garden we came across a curious old horn, of no small dimensions, supported on a stand. Supposing it was placed there for some purpose, we inquired, and found there was a fine echo from the opposite shore, which could be produced on blowing the same; so we sounded a blast, a steady and a long one, and surely enough after a few seconds came back to us a distinct and remarkably loud reply. I know nowhere else of so good a

single echo, its answer coming so clear and after so long an interval, as to make this a unique one amongst echoes.

The next morning we were up betimes. The glorious sun was shining so brightly overhead, his warmth being tempered with a delicious sea breeze, that we made an early start, especially as we had much to see that day, including some of the noblest works of man's hands. So we had the horses put to and started off on a visit of inspection to the Isle of Anglesey and Beaumaris. It was a grand drive over Telford's daring bridge, a bold and stupendous piece of engineering work, especially considering the time when it was erected, spanning as it does, at such a giddy height, with one mighty bound the stormy Menai Straits. We saw some ships beneath us sailing, and looked down upon their very topmost masts. What a splendid sight this must have been to our forefathers when driving over here in the old coaching days. Now travellers are whirled over the Straits in a tubular iron tunnel, and see nothing at the very spot where all is so grand and beautiful. Only a sudden darkness and an infernal roar tell them they are crossing the water, and are passing unseen some of the finest scenery in Wales. Truly railway travellers are to be pitied, at least so we thought on that bright, sunny day. Perhaps we saw everything too much through a rosy pair of spectacles ; possibly, had we been obliged to take the journey we were doing, and the weather, instead of being all smiles, was stormy and raining heavily, we should have been glad of a place in the despised railway carriage.

However that may be, it appears to me our ancestors saw more of the beauties of the country when travelling than we do in our present enlightened age. The railway takes us under instead of over the finest hills, and dashes us along through miles of cuttings, which naturally are the most frequent where the country is the grandest and most beautiful. We thus lose the very charm of travel, the gradual, ever-varying landscape and the blending scenery. Driving by road as we did, what a wealth of memories of lovely and romantic scenes, what delightful spots and pleasant places, what charming remembrances and recollections did we not gather and store from day to day! Why, we might have travelled by railway all our lives, and not have had anything pleasing or worth remembering for it all.

The road on to Beaumaris was as beautiful as it was possible for a road to be, overhung as it was with trees of various kinds, forming a pleasant shade; the golden sunbeams glanced through the many openings in the leaves overhead, forming on the ground beneath a chequered, changing pattern of white and gold. There were, too, moss-covered rocks, through the chinks of which the pale blue forget-me-not and other delicate wild flowers peeped shyly forth. The ground elsewhere was covered with bracken ferns and bilbery shoots, amongst which here and there the bright red of the ragged robin struggled to show itself; and, half-drowned amid the general green, we noticed some timid bluebells. These and other unappreciated flowers of the woods made the ground look quite cheerful, with their

various colourings and delicate tints; and down between the trees we caught glimpses of the sheen and glitter of the restless sea, and a sparkling as of countless diamonds, as the rippling waves caught the sunlight from above.

Beaumaris struck us as being a very proper and and an extremely quiet, not to say an intensely dull, watering-place. A few hours here was more than enough for us. There is the sea certainly, and a beach of some kind—not a very good one, in our opinion; some lodging-houses there are, of course, and the usual hotel accommodation, and fine views over towards the mainland. The views struck us as being the best part of the place, but, however fine, one cannot altogether exist on views. From the promenade by the sea you have a splendid prospect. Near at hand is the lovely Puffin Island; further away is the Great Orme's Head, looking like another isle of the sea, the low land of the peninsula not being visible; then come the mighty cliffs, the beetling precipices of the frowning Penmaenmawr; but above all is the magnificent panorama of the whole of the Snowdonian range, ridge over ridge, hill over hill, mountain over mountain, till they are lost in the haze of the far-off distance. It is not often though, we should imagine, as on the present occasion, the whole of the peaks would be clear of clouds: we were extremely fortunate in our day.

But what we came to Beaumaris to see especially was the old castle. This we found at the back of the town. It is a massive building, the walls of which enclose a large extent of ground, but we were

disappointed with the general appearance of the place. The outer walls, defended by ten Moorish-looking towers, are low, and quite failed to impress the beholder. Very different in this respect is Beaumaris to either Carnarvon or Conway, and its situation offers, too, a strange contrast to the bold sites of these strongholds, being placed in a low and marshy part of the country, hence the title of *Beau-maris*. Surrounding the castle in olden times was a deep fosse, connected with and filled by the sea, and which enabled ships to discharge their cargoes immediately under the very walls of the fortress, where they were, of course, at the same time protected. Edward I. was a great strategist, as well as a mighty warrior and a brave man. All his castles are built near to the sea, giving him the great advantage of being able to make use of his royal navy as well as his land forces, having thus a double base of operations. The great English king was also a wise man and a clever statesman ; his uniting Wales to England was an undoubted blessing to both countries. As Freeman says, 'the Welsh were neither exterminated nor enslaved' by the far-seeing wisdom of Edward ; they were incorporated and formed into a portion of a powerful, united kingdom. Would that all our rulers had been as wise as he ! Scotland might long before it was have been joined to us, and Ireland might now be contented and prosperous.

We rambled about the old ruins unattended by any guide, and were thankful to find the place free from tourists, or even the suggestion of them, so our fancies had full play. Poor old castle, thy battered

walls look very peaceful now, all lichen, moss, and ivy covered as they are ; thy banners are the many creepers and wild flowers waving from thy towers. Empty are thy dungeons, though none the worse for that ; thy banqueting hall is all deserted and open to the sky and weather, jackdaws now alone hold revels there ; within thy ramparts the peaceful sheep are feeding, and innocent buttercups and daisies grow upon thy grass-grown courts, where of old the stern-faced warriors trod. Could they return once more and visit their old haunts, they would not see much that is warlike, or that would remind them of thy departed glories. Thy greatness is a thing of the past. *Sic transit gloria mundi !*

It has always struck me with respect to these old Welsh castles, grand and magnificent though they are, overaweing even in their very ruins, that we miss much of the romantic human interest that attaches itself to so many of the Border strongholds. These latter nearly all possess some tradition or traditions of heroic laird or doughty chieftain. Theirs is a history more or less exciting—a history full of romantic, legendary lore, giving to each an individuality, a personal interest Welsh castles mostly lack. There are strange stories told of the bold moss-troopers, of the terror all around their forages inspired ; of marauding lords who made many and bold raids, returning home laden with captives and spoils, and cattle stolen from near and afar, for these noble warriors were not over particular. It must be remembered, in those brave days of old cattle-stealing was considered a noble pastime. Then might was right.

The good old rule sufficed them :
That they should take who had the power,
And they should keep who can.

On our return journey we noticed the Anglesey monument, a most conspicuous object, and visible for miles around, elevated as it is on the rocky eminence, Crag-y-Dinas. It was erected in 1817 to the memory of Henry William, Marquis of Anglesey, who fought so gloriously at Waterloo, and in 1860 a bronze effigy of the Marquis in his hussar uniform was placed at the top of the column. It is a fitting memorial to a brave officer. We next inspected Stephenson's tubular bridge. It is a massive structure, giving one the impression of colossal strength, and is a worthy specimen and a lasting monument of his genius. We found a man in charge of the structure who allowed us to inspect the insides of the tubes. and afterwards we descended to the shore, where we looked up upon the mighty work. This point centainly affords the most striking view of the bridge ; one obtains from it a much better idea of its vast size and strength than from above.

Stephenson was doubtful at first whether the iron tubes would be sufficiently strong for their purpose without further support, and had arranged for chains to assist in sustaining the same, in the manner of a suspension bridge, and places in the walls on the top of the piers reserved for these are still to be seen. We saw at the George an old print, showing these chains as they were at first intended to be used, the result giving a strange appearance to the bridge, used as one's eyes now are to the plain

simplicity of the structure ; for these were the early days of railway engineering and gigantic schemes connected with the land, and everything had to be discovered and worked out. Then the various strains, the strength of iron girders, the comparative merits of wrought and cast iron in such structures had not been calculated, and all was unknown and uncertain. Endless matters, trivial and otherwise, had to be carefully considered and allowed for (such as the contraction and expansion of the enormous mass of iron in the quickly changing temperature), and many other important details had to be duly deliberated upon, tests and experiments having to be made as well. The bridge was built in less than five years, and cost a trifle over 600,000*l.*

We returned to the main-land once more over Telford's suspension bridge. As a structure, compared to Stephenson's work, it is certainly wanting in massiveness and apparent strength, though amply strong enough for its purpose. But it has a beauty and a lightness far more pleasing to the eye, and its bold leap from shore to shore in one gigantic span gives an impression of daring the more solid and steady-going railway bridge quite fails to convey. One is a fine work of art, the other is more a specimen of engineering skill.

These bridges are amongst the wonders of Wales. And here I may add, Telford's structure was opened to the public on January 30, 1826, the Royal Mail coach from London to Holyhead crossing over it on that day during a terrific thunderstorm. The whole

cost of the bridge was 120,000*l.* and it was six years in construction.

We returned late that evening to our comfortable quarters at the George, well pleased with our day's wanderings and sight-seeings.

CHAPTER X.

Penrhyn Castle—A Quaint Old Drinking Horn—A Model Village—Penrhyn Slate Quarries—Destroying a Mountain—Grand Scenery—Llyn Ogwen—An Ill-omened Tarn—A Birthplace of Storms—Strange Adventure with an Artist—Falls of Benglog—The Three-Headed Mountain—A Lonely Hermit—Capel Curig Hotel and Lakes—A Useful Waterwheel—Moel Siabod—An Artist Friend—A Painter's Life—A Rural Inn—The Swallow Falls—A Haunted Cataract—The Miner's Bridge—The Royal Oak—A Valuable Sign-board—Inns all full.

THE road out of Bangor proved to be somewhat tame at first, but gradually improved, and then became grand in the extreme.

The first thing of interest we saw was Penrhyn Castle, the keep of which stood out darkly and boldly against a waste of grey sky, its banner proudly floating in the breeze. This magnificent pile, the seat of Lord Penrhyn, is a modern mansion constructed upon a baronial scale, the architecture and design of which blends the outward features of a Norman castle with the interior decorations and comforts of the nineteenth century. The tower or keep of this grand edifice is copied from Rochester Castle, and from the roadway the general appearance of the building is that of an old Edwardian stronghold in its palmy days. One might easily conjure oneself, when looking upon this grand structure, were it not

for its park and peaceful surroundings, back again in the olden time.

There is no difficulty in obtaining admittance to the interior, and the apartments and decorations are well worth a visit. But what struck us, as being of more interest than all else besides, was an ancient family heirloom in the shape of a drinking-horn, called, but why we could not make out, a *hirlas*. It belonged to one Piers Gruffyd, a hero of renown who owned these estates in the time of good Queen Bess. He joined the fleet under Sir Francis Drake, and, in a vessel he equipped at his own cost, fought in that ever memorable engagement with the Spanish Armada.

The *hirlas* is really the large horn of an ox, suspended by a silver chain. It has the initials and family names engraved upon it of its former chief and owner. We presumed it was used at feasts and festivals, and took the same position on those occasions as the Saxon wassail bowl did of still earlier days. Tradition says it was expected that each guest should empty the horn at one draught, sounding it immediately afterwards to prove he had duly drained it dry. A dinner party in those days must have been an interesting affair, though not quite up to our modern ideas as to what such entertainments should be.

Near the main entrance to Penrhyn Castle we passed through the model village of Llandegai, with its well-built cottages, looking exceedingly clean and neat; but somehow the hamlet, picturesque though it was, did not please us. It looked unnatural and

artificial, reminding us more of a stage village than a real one, in which people live and move and have their being. It had the fault (if fault, indeed, it can be called) of appearing too prim and tidy ; in fine, too good for this matter-of-fact, every-day life.

In this respect it appeared to us like a good many pictures which impress us as being unnatural and unreal, because the artist will make all so clean and swept and garnished, forgetting, alas ! that such things as dust and dirt and mud do exist, though we may wish ever so much they did not.

The next thing of interest we came across on our way was the vast Penrhyn slate quarries, situated near the village of Bethesda—about the ugliest village in Wales, by the way—a place to be seen, and afterwards not easily forgotten. Not that there is any beauty in this mighty void hewn out of the solid mountain. And what a scene we looked upon ! —a huge amphitheatre, a wilderness of scarred, seared, and riven precipices, utter confusion combined with strictest order ; the tints of the crags around being of a dismal, cold, and piteous hue, not a bit of cheerful colour anywhere to compensate for all this dreary ugliness. Presently a horn blows ; a minute's breathless silence, then endless blasts take place, whiffs of bluey-grey smoke appear in all directions, and anon comes the crashing sound of falling rocks, as large fragments of the same are hurled down from the hill-sides. Presently swarms of workmen, all unseen before, become visible, and at once attack the fallen slates, and so the ceaseless work of destruction goes on. The very heart of the

mountain is being eaten thus by piecemeal away; the sound of the different and quickly repeated blasts giving one more the impression of a gigantic artillery duel, than being owing to the mere legitimate necessities of commerce.

Slate is everywhere a prominent feature in Wales; walls, houses, and bridges are built with it, slabs of it form gate-post, fences, stepping-stones, &c., &c. It roofs the inhabitants when living, and covers them when dead. Unfortunately Welsh slates are of a dark grey, gloomy hue, not the delicate green of the Lake district, consequently their colour is somewhat monotonous and oppressive. After all, there is nothing to compare for durability, warmth, economy, or appearance to the good old-fashioned red tiles of our forefathers. What delicious bits of colour, when the sun shines on them, do they not afford in the landscape, and how finely their rich orange tints tell out against the green of nature! Compared to such, how bleak and cold and bare are the dull, miserable slates!

From the quarries the road began to ascend, gradually at first, then severely afterwards, and as it rose the scenery became grander and grander. Ahead of us was a wilderness of bleak, savage-looking, cloud-capped mountains, forming, as it were, a mighty barrier against any further progress on our part; and into the very heart of these our way led. On our left there rose abruptly above us high precipices and overhanging crags, at the feet of which and all about were scattered in endless confusion gigantic masses of rock of every conceivable size

and form, ruins of the cliffs above that have been hurled down from time to time. In one or two places we noticed large fragments of rocks split almost asunder from the mountain's side, and appearing as though a mere touch would send them downwards, crashing, upon our devoted heads. No doubt they had been like that for ages past, but here and there recent-looking scars on the sides of the precipices, and fresh ruins below, told that the rocks were still being detached from time to time, and any day might come down crashing on the road. In fact, such a case had actually occurred some years before. A gentleman, driving along here in the winter time, saw an enormous piece of the cliff overhead, estimated at over a thousand tons, dash, with a tremendous crash, headlong down from the mountain side, and entirely block up the road. A minute earlier, and he would inevitably have been crushed beneath this immense mass of rock. A rather exciting and alarming adventure! Fortunately nothing of the kind happened to us, or our journey might have had a sudden and an unpleasant termination.

The road we were traversing, though lonely and desolate now, formerly formed a portion of the old Parliamentary Mail coach road from London to Holyhead, and was constructed by Telford, the famous engineer of pre-railway times. And a wonderful road it is, making its way through a most difficult and mountainous country—a country railroads have been unable to approach even to this day, although they now penetrate almost

everywhere. It certainly is a marvellous bit of engineering.

We now shortly arrived at the top of this wild pass, and truly the scene was a terrific one. All around us, abruptly rising, stood the mighty mountains, solemn, dim, and vast. The only sounds were of the moaning winds and ceaseless roaring of many torrents. Bare, dark precipices surrounded us, at the feet of which were mighty masses of fallen rock.

The day for the scene was perfect. Grey clouds and swathing mists were drifting in and out amongst the crags, now rising and disclosing forbidding-looking, serrated peaks high over head, from which descended dashing, milk-white streams. Again the vapours would suddenly descend, concealing all; and anon a rift in the clouds would let down a ray of sunlight upon this wild scene of gloom, making, by its momentary bright gleam on a bit of wet rock or growing patch of yellow moss, everything else by contrast appear doubly dark and eerie.

We continued on our way and presently came across a little cottage, built of rough-hewn stone, close by the side of a bleak, black-looking tarn called Llyn Ogwen. On inquiry we found we could put our horses up here for a time in an old shed, and, moreover, could obtain some tea and bread and butter for ourselves inside. We were delighted to procure this welcome and unexpected shelter, for we wished to have more time to inspect the wonderful scenery around. We made our steeds as comfortable as circumstances would permit; the carriage we left on the roadway, well protected by waterproofs in

case a downpour should come on; and then proceeded to take a more leisurely survey about.

Llyn Ogwen, by whose gloomy shores we were standing, appeared forbidding enough. A desolate, suicidal-looking sheet of water, from whose sides dark, frowning cliffs arose, sterile, rugged, and stern.

> There sometimes doth a leaping fish
> Send thro' the tarn a lonely cheer;
> The crags repeat the raven's croak,
> In symphony austere;
> Thither the rainbow comes—the cloud—
> And mists that spread the flying shroud;
> And sunbeams, and the sounding blast
> That, if it could, would hurry past,
> But that enormous barriers bind it fast.

High above us, in the very heart of the gloomiest recesses of the mountains, we learnt the ill-omened Llyn Idwal was situated. To this deserted, lonely spot we at once proceeded to climb, and a rough and wet scramble it proved to be. We traced our way by the brawling stream that flows from the tarn. In due time we arrived at the spot. And what a scene of gloom and horror was before us! An inky-black, uncanny tarn, hemmed in by still blacker precipices. It is a place to make a bold man shudder, a very abode of darkness and evil. No wonder it has a cursed history. It was here that the young prince Idwal was murdered by his treacherous guardian, he being bribed to commit the awful deed.

> No human ear but Dunant's heard
> Young Idwal's dying scream.

Above this desolate tarn, right on the face of the mountains, is situated Tioll-du—literally, in English,

'the hole of blackness.' It is now, however, better known as the Devil's Kitchen. It consists of a deep, dark fissure, rent in some extraordinary manner in the huge, black walls of rock, showing upon them as a still darker spot—a very hiding-place of demons.

Altogether, the place and scene depressed us. We spoke little, gazing in moody silence at all before us, and we were not sorry to leave this doomed and hateful spot. As some houses have their ghostly rooms, so nature has her haunted chambers, only nature's are on a much grander scale.

About half-way between Llyn Idwal and Llyn Ogwen, somewhat nearer the latter than the former, is the spot where Herkomer had his wooden hut built, and from which he painted his famous picture of the 'Gloom of Idwal,' doing all his work directly from nature, forcing her secrets from her, daring her in her very stronghold. In my opinion this picture is one of the grandest and finest landscapes that have ever been painted—true to nature, and true also to one of the most magnificent scenes she has to show. The colouring of the rocks here, as I discovered in attempting to paint them, is simply marvellous. Dark, gloomy, and threatening though they appeared, in truth, to match them, I found an indescribable deep, purply slate, plum colour to be the nearest approachable tint—a colour extremely difficult to procure on the palate, and therefore even more impossible to express in words. On our return to the cottage we found our frugal repast spread, and which repast, frugal though it was, we thoroughly enjoyed

after our walk. Here also we discovered, of all places in the world, in this humble, lowly cottage, a visitors' book!—and not only a visitors' book, but a book of considerable value. I would gladly have given 10*l.* for it. It appears many artists come up here to paint the wonderful scenery around, and this is the only shelter for them. Here they leave their canvasses, &c., and sometimes procure even a rough shake down for the night. And in return for such hospitality, besides, of course, a due pecuniary recompense, one of them (an artist of note, an R.A. in fact) gave the worthy dame who keeps the place a book, and, moreover, did the first sketch in it, and a capital one it is too. Others have followed suit, and have from time to time amused themselves by doing drawings and paintings in the same, when, as is often the case here, they have been kept prisoners indoors by the weather, the state of the elements outside not unfrequently being such as totally to prevent any artistic work being done.

For this bleak mountain region is the very birthplace of storms and tempests, and grand and sublime though the effects may be, still it is only occasionally sketches or paintings of the scenery are to be made; unless, indeed, like Herkomer, and a few other much to be envied men, the artist can afford to erect a hut, and live on the spot, and await from time to time his opportunities. But artists are, alas! generally poor men. Often I have found the poorer the man the better the artist. Was not David Cox poor and unappreciated in his day? A skilful artist may have good luck and make his fortune. Sometimes he does,

and richly deserves it; oftener, I fear, he deserves and doesn't. An artist I afterwards met farther on in our journey (at Trefriw), told me he had arranged for quarters at this very cottage for a week, and had trudged there on foot all the way, some fifteen miles or so, over a bleak and stony road, and had, after all, to return home without being able to secure more than one solitary hasty sketch, even that one being damaged by the rain. Such is life, or rather, perhaps, I should say the life of a landscape artist in search of the sublime in this outlandish place. However, out of evil some good comes; the aforesaid book generally profits by the artists' failures.

The magnificent cloud and mist effects, together with the powerful light and shade over all, made me, on the present fairly favourable occasion, anxious to attempt a sketch, even though a hurried one, as a reminiscence of this wild, weird spot, to take home with me. So, although it was by no means an agreeable task working out of doors on that cold, chilly, damp day (I wonder if it is ever warm up here), still I determined to try for something. So I unpacked my easel, and attempted a quarto imperial block. I have the picture by me now, showing the wreaths of mists just lifting, and revealing in places the dark grey peaks beyond, with a foaming torrent dashing downwards, apparently from out of the very clouds. Huge boulders are lying about in all directions in the foreground, the middle distance being almost black, so powerful was the light and shade. By the side of the stream is a roughly suggested footpath, and along this, staff in hand, an old shepherd is

wending his way homewards. This touch of human life completes the picture—the warm bit of colouring of his old, faded jacket, &c., telling most effectively where all else is so cool, and grey, and cold. As I look upon the sketch now, I vividly recall the whole of that wonderful scene.

What a delightful gift to be able to sketch is! to have the power to represent any scene you may wish, and as and how it impresses you. And yet, after all, if one's eyes are only early trained to it, how easily and naturally it all comes! Every child should be taught drawing, and afterwards painting, as certainly as he or she is instructed to write; it is not a more difficult accomplishment, and it is one, once learned, never forgotten. And what a fund of interest and pleasure, aye, and usefulness, may it not afford in after life! I do not mean, of course, that I consider everyone would be able to paint pictures of sufficient merit to find places on the walls of the Royal Academy. But without doing this, to be able to fairly represent any bit that takes one's fancy—an old ruined castle, a mountain lake, a rural cottage, &c., or explain any matter with the aid of either pencil or brush, is an accomplishment worth much, and giving endless pleasure, not only to one's self, but perchance to others.

Just as I was about finishing my sketch, and preparing to put my tools away, I became aware of some one overlooking me—not an uncommon incident, as all artists who work at all out of doors know. Presently the onlooker exclaimed, 'I say, that's a fine bit you're doing.' 'Yes,' I replied, in

as distant a manner as possible, for these strangers are at times very intrusive and annoying, and if you do not shake them off at first there is no hope for you. The onlooker, nothing abashed, essayed another remark—about himself, however, this time. 'Did a six-footer of it last year, from this very spot. Comes in well, don't it?' A pause. 'A regular screamer it was, too—a sunset on the tops of the cliffs; piled on the orange vermilion, I can tell you; had it hung in the big shop in Piccadilly.' 'Oh, indeed,' I ventured to reply, if possibly in an even more distant manner than before. 'Yes,' said my still unseen companion, 'and sold it, too, for a big sum.' Another pause. Then he continued: 'I say, are you a Bettws fellow?' (meaning, I presume, if I was one of the colony of artists residing at Bettws-y-Coed). I replied, 'No.' 'No? Oh, I thought you were. I say, though, where do you hail from, then?' 'London,' I replied, as laconically as possible. But, nothing daunted by my manner, my interrogator returned to the attack again, though with somewhat more respect in the tone of his voice; evidently London artists stand upon a high pedestal in this part of the world. 'I say,' he continued, as he noticed, my sketch being now finished, I was preparing to pack up my things, 'I say, come down with me and see some of my work. I'm in diggins at a farmhouse near here. Awful lively sort of place this, ain't it?' &c. And so the strange conversation rattled on apace, he walking with me down to the phaeton, and insisting upon helping to carry my traps. I saw he wished to be civil and

obliging ; he, I suppose, had taken me for a brother artist (at which mistake, by the way, I felt flattered), and consequently his freedom in addressing me, artists having a sort of freemasonry amongst themselves. So, finding I had run across a most original character, I concluded to comply with his request, and walk with him to his quarters. We had a scramble of over a mile to a dreary and desolate moorland cottage, called by courtesy a farmhouse. However, there was a fine view of the surrounding mountains from the place. Here, I discovered, he had a room literally crammed full of canvasses, colours, finished and half-finished pictures, easels, pipes, violins, and all the endless paraphernalia artists consider necessary to complete a studio. But I discovered some capital and high-class work he had done, one picture being especially excellent and of great merit. It was a painting of an old Welsh moorland cottage, with a lichen and moss-covered roof, and a distant peep of blue-grey hills beyond ; it was certainly a gem in its way. He informed me he had built a temporary wooden hut on the mountain-side, from which he painted his picture of Idwal, selling the structure when he had finished his work. Altogether, my newly-acquired friend proved to be a very good-hearted fellow, though a most decided character. Well, I must confess I rather enjoy meeting a character now and again ; there is so much that is ordinary and commonplace in the world, that a change is sometimes agreeable. And so, after a quiet chat over a pipe—artists always smoke—and after inspecting some more of

his studies and drinking his health in a glass of milk—he would insist upon this—I bade him a hearty good-bye, going away with much more respect for him than I had entertained before. One meets strange companions, and, I may add, interesting ones, even on a driving tour.

On my way back to the cottage I took a rough scramble across country, though not much out of my way, to see some falls called Benglog, which my artist friend told me were well worth seeing. I found them easily, and very fine falls they are too, consisting of a considerable volume of water, which is hurled over a mighty precipice and comes dashing down between a deep chasm in the rocks. The height of the cataract I should judge to be considerably over a hundred feet. It has for a background the lofty, black mountains surrounding Llyn Ogwen, from which tarn, in fact, the waters of the falls come. Although I had no difficulty in finding my way to them, there is not a suspicion of a path; I had to scramble over boulders and through damp, boggy places, getting my feet wet through for my trouble. And yet these falls, with the unrivalled scenery around, are amongst the finest in Wales, and certainly the grandest in matter of surroundings. Perchance writers of guide-books may make the discovery some day, and in an evil hour write of their praises; then pathways will be made, probably a charge of so much a head exacted, and tourists will swarm and rave about them, and the place will be spoilt irretrievably. May that time be far off! How is it tourists follow the guide-books so, like a

flock of sheep, and see scenery through other people's eyes and not with their own? Guide-books, too, though most useful in their way to direct, not to dictate, are apt but to re-echo each other's statements; what one praises the other does, and what one condemns so do they all, as a rule. I wonder much the why and wherefore of this.

But enough of this long digression. Whilst I had been paying my visit and inspecting the falls, the phaeton had been awaiting me, with horses duly harnessed, at the cottage door, as ordered before I started, my wife being anxious at my long-delayed appearance, having a vague idea I must have either fallen over a precipice on my way back, or that I had been enticed away by the make-believe artist and been robbed or murdered, or something of the sort, and left to die on the bleak mountain moorlands. However, my personal appearance, all safe and sound and very jolly, at once dispelled all anxiety, and I was soon in my seat on the box by her side, and, giving the word to the groom, we were again once more rattling on our way, and a very rough one it proved to be. Presently, on the right of us, the mists cleared off for a time, revealing from head to foot a singularly rugged and curiously shaped mountain called Trifaen, *i.e.* the Three-Headed. It appears from the road to be almost unclimbable, so steep and precipitous is it on all sides. But the strangest feature of this wonderful peak is that three huge masses of rock are so thrown on end on its summit, that from below they appear, to anyone looking up, exactly as though there were

three men on the top. We pointed out this peculiar effect to our man—who, by the way, took a great interest in the journey and all he saw—and it was a long time before he could be convinced that what he saw were only rocks, and not real, live tourists. The valley through which we were travelling used in past times to be inhabited by beavers, which amphibious animals must have had a very secluded home here. It is desolate and dreary enough even now. The only sign of life we saw was a solitary heron, sitting on a rock all alone, and, if the truth be told, looking very melancholy.

The road now began to descend gradually, but continually, and after a few miles the valley widened by degrees; the mountains on either hand were not so high; the clouds overhead were broken and detached, like large ships drifting upon an open sea, their keels just scraping the tops of the peaks as they passed by, but they were not held and detained by them as they were by the higher and more precipitous hills around the desolate Llyn Ogwen. The peaty, mossy, damp, and boulder-strewn land showed signs of improvement; the turf became more plentiful; the dark peat-beds ceased; the loose rocks had in places been gathered from off the surface of the ground and built into rough boundary walls, although too low to keep any kind of Welsh cattle either in or out. Small, brown, and much discoloured haystacks appeared, all bound round by ropes of straw, and on the thatch, consisting of reeds, were placed huge stones, in order to resist as far as possible the wintry storms. The

atmosphere, too, improved as we descended, and we suddenly drove into the warm and welcome rays of the setting sun. Looking back, we noticed the sombre clouds and mists still hanging like a dark pall over the mountains we had left behind. We shortly now arrived at the little moorland hamlet of Capel Curig, so named from an old British hermit and saint. Cyryg, or Curig, as he was called, came and fixed his abode here in the sixth century. He lived and died in a cell in this wild spot, a lonely anchorite, and in due course was canonized ; and for long after his death relics of this saint were sold as sovereign remedies against all kinds of evil spirits, sprites, and goblins, and from wicked wights. We drove up to the door of a large inn here, and soon were comfortably ensconced inside. In the evening we walked out, as is our wont, to inspect the neighbourhood. We noticed the hotel was all slate-fronted, as a protection, we presumed, against the weather, by which we concluded it *did* rain here at times. In fact, it is said that this is one of the wettest parts of Wales, and that when once it begins to rain it never knows when to leave off. There are traditions, too, of parties staying here whole weeks without obtaining even a single peep of Snowdon, and leaving the spot in disgust ; all of which, however, it is as well not to repeat to the landlady, as she maintains they are base libels invented by ill-natured tourists. A small waterwheel, looking almost like a toy one, amused us ; it was just outside the hotel, and on inquiry we found it was used for churning the butter. Useful waterwheel ! We

next proceeded down to the river, over which there is a very quaint, old, rustic bridge; a picturesque affair it is, too, and has been sketched over and over again. We recognised it at once as an old friend, having admired numerous paintings of it in the various water-colour exhibitions. From this spot, perhaps, the best and most comprehensive view of Snowdon is to be had—that is, when the weather permits, for we learnt it was by no means an every-day occurrence to see the peak of that mist and cloud-loving mountain uncovered. Near here are two small lakes, called Mymbyr, the trout in which are famous alike for their size and flavour, and a boat belonging to the hotel is anchored on one for the use of visitors who care to try their hand at the shy Welsh trout. And here I may add, any man who can fill his creel from the much-whipped Welsh streams and lakes is no ordinary fisherman. Though the temptation was considerable, I felt my time would be better employed in making a sketch of Y Wyddfa, as the highest peak of Snowdon is locally called, than attempting to impose artificial flies upon the too-knowing, speckled inhabitants of the Mymbyr lakes. In the evening, over a pipe in the smoke-room of the hotel, I formed the acquaintance of an artist who made a point of residing here each summer, doing the fine scenery all around, making mountains and moorlands his especial study. He kindly invited me into a room he had converted into a studio. I inspected his pictures with much pleasure, and only regret now I did not purchase one of them, a very fine view of Snowdon and the lakes

from the very bridge we had so recently been admiring.

The next morning we started on our way to Bettws-y-Coed, and a most lovely drive we had through a beautifully wooded and hilly country, abounding in waterfalls and cascades, fine views, and charming bits not easily to be described, but most grateful to an artist's eye. All this was a great and refreshing contrast to our bleak journey of the day before. The first object of interest on our way that claimed our attention was the finely shaped mountain peak of Moel Siabod, 2,880 feet in height, and of which we had a splendid view, his grand outline causing him to look far more impressive than his mere altitude would lead one to expect. Along the more level meads at his foot we noticed the white gleam of more than one artist's umbrella, the first we had seen on our journey so far; they, the aforesaid umbrellas, looking for all the world like so many gigantic mushrooms. A short distance farther on another easel came in sight, and, strangely enough, we discovered the owner to be a friend, the discovery being made by his collie dog, which came running up to greet us. Clever and knowing dogs are collies, handsome-looking animals too, only unfortunately their tempers, as a rule, are rather quick. We alighted, and duly inspected, criticised, and praised our friend's work, and indulged in a short chat with him, and we wondered the while what would be the fate and history of the picture he was painting, who would be the eventual purchaser, and where would it find its home? It is

a wonderful thing, too, to think of what becomes of all the countless paintings that are brought into existence every year; they must be counted by thousands, good and indifferent, excluding the daubs and bad ones. Where do they all go to? Pictures are valuable articles, and are well cared for, so, besides the ceaseless yearly addition to the numbers of recently executed ones, there is to be considered the enormous quantity already in existence. Like many other of the world's puzzles, this is a mystery to me.

Surely a landscape artist's life must be a very jolly existence, provided, of course, he is fairly successful, and has no financial worries. Out much in the fresh air, his health and spirits should be good, and dyspepsia, that curse of town dwellers, should be unknown to him. He revels, lucky dog, in the very best of scenery, his profession taking him into all the most beautiful and romantic parts of the country. Then there is the *bonhomie*, the good feeling and fellowship universally prevailing, with but few exceptions, amongst the wielders of the brush everywhere. After his day's work is done, he returns to his inn or his quarters, and generally manages to have with him some boon companions, with whom he spends a right merrie evening. Who would change such a life for the busy hum and bustle of a city office, even though the profits of the latter were tenfold. Money cannot buy everything; men often work and slave for the future, but when the future and a fortune comes, they either are careless, or still work on, or have become so

immured in their business, that their relish and appetite for enjoyment and relaxation is gone. Business is their pleasure; they cannot tear themselves away from their idol, and, if they did, most probably their zest in life would be gone, and like the historic retired tallow-chandler, they would want to go back on melting days. Thus they always are to be, but never will be, blest. The artist sees life in quite a different light. Careless, happy being, sufficient for him is the evil of the day; what cares he for the morrow? he lets that take care of itself. And it is strange how often it will take care of itself. We of the present generation are perhaps of too anxious a temperament. It is almost as great a fault to be over-cautious as to be the opposite.

Soon after leaving our friend we passed a very beau-ideal (outside, at any rate) of a rural country inn, and it was here, he told us, he had taken up his quarters. The hotel was backed by pleasantly wooded hills, with suggestions of secluded shady walks; around it was a sunny garden, with inviting-looking seats and a trout pond. The view from the place, too, was very perfect. Immediately over the road was a fine cascade, across which was thrown a picturesque, rustic, wooden bridge; close by this was a mill, with a busy waterwheel; the whole being backed up by rich woods of larch and ash, with peeps of hills and mountain-peaks beyond. Reader, dost thou like the picture? It is a true one. Not every wayside hostelrie, even in this favoured country, has such a romantic landscape placed before it to refresh the traveller's weary eye. A short

distance along from this cosy-looking inn we came across a fine torrent by the roadside, making a great noise and show, dashing over bold rocks, and forming a fall of some eighty feet or so. Over this was an ancient, one-arched Welsh bridge, boldly springing from rock to rock; it was grey and stained with the weathering of years. We were so pleased with the whole scene that we pulled up the horses here whilst we made a sketch of the spot. But what especially took our fancy in connection with the place was that a recess had been purposely built out of the road, to allow such travellers as might wish to rest and inspect this picturesque bit. Those old engineers, unlike, I fear, most modern ones, had an eye for the beautiful. Had a railway been constructed along this valley instead of a road, it is ten to one but that, in place of considering travellers at all, the line would have completely spoilt this charming cascade. Such, at any rate, has been the case with the railway constructed along the famous Dolwyddelan valley, a large viaduct of which crosses the same just over some fine cascades, and in its most romantic part, and, of course, quite disfigures the scenery.

Our way now began to descend and took us through a forest of pines, the resinous odour of which was wafted to us as we drove along. At the 'Swallow Falls' inn we stopped, and got down to see these, perhaps the best known of all the Welsh cascades. Here, in the olden times, even His Majesty's Royal Mail used to pull up for five minutes to enable its travellers to inspect the cataract. Rail-

ways are hardly so accommodating. Now-a-days time is more valuable, and perhaps people are hardly so romantic. It is all hurry, and bustle, and busy competition in the present enlightened day. To see the falls we had to go through a small wicket built in a wall. A boy stood at the same. In reply to our enquiries he said there was no regular charge, but that a trifle from each visitor was expected, and he left it to our generosity to give what we liked. At the best it is disagreeable to have grand natural sights made a peep-show of in this manner, even when there is a regular charge, but I know nothing more irritating than to have it left to your honour what you will give. However, we came into the country to enjoy ourselves, so it was useless to make a trouble over such a matter. How is it, I wonder, that trifles are so worrying? I have often worried and made myself quite miserable over a mere trifle, when a greater misfortune has not bothered me half so much. Unfortunately, life is made up of trifles, and consequently we are bound to have endless annoyances in this world. But to return to the falls. These certainly are very beautiful, in spite of the numerous walks, notice boards, &c., which give a certain artificial aspect to the place. The water comes down grandly, rushing over the rocks which here and there divide the cascade, or rather cascades, for there are three in all. It thunders and roars on its downward course, until at last it makes its final leap into a boiling, foaming cauldron of gloomy, troubled waters. Tradition says, and therefore the fact must be true, that a certain old knight, one Sir

John Wynn, of Gwydir, who departed this life in the year of grace 1626, is condemned to dwell for ever in the above seething cauldron as a punishment for all his wickedness. He must have been an especially debased old sinner, if it be true that he was particularly selected out of the host of other transgressors for his superlative misdeeds; for in those times the worthy knights were not over circumspect in their conduct, and who would dare to question them as to their doings and actions? Amid the noise of the cataract, re-echoed as it is by the rocky walls, Welshmen say his wailings can at times be heard; needless to say we did not hear them. One strange thing about the story was, we never could make out what he was really supposed to have done to deserve such a dreadful fate; all we could learn was that he had been a very wicked, cruel man, but what the wickedness or cruelty consisted of nobody knew; we therefore hoped and trusted his memory had been much maligned.

From here we selected to walk most of the way to Bettws-y-Coed, for the scenery appeared to us so charming that we wished to see as much of it and as closely as possible. Therefore, as soon as we could, we struck the stream proceeding from the falls and followed it downwards for two or three miles. It was rough, and in places slippery, clambering over boulders, and hard work pushing our way through tangled briars here and there, but oh! the beauty of that walk. Waving pines were overhead, and a Welsh mountain river was by our side, tumbling and

gambolling from rock to rock, making cascade after cascade as it journeyed along.

> Nothing is heard but the sweet melody
> Which the stream makes, contending with the rocks
> That check its rapid flight.

We walked on and on, following the river the while, till we came upon another beauty-spot, well known to artists and others, the miner's bridge. It consists simply of a rustic wooden ladder, with a hand-rail on either hand for protection, thrown across the stream at a point where the rocks rise to a considerable height on either side, and where the scenery is especially charming. The ladder starts at a lower level on one bank of the river to a much higher one on the other side, and thus forms an angle to the same. It is principally used by the men employed on some slate quarries near here, as a short cut to their work.

Anything quite like it is, I think, not to be seen elsewhere, half ladder, half bridge, a little of both and yet neither exactly one nor the other; it is a strange, picturesque, nondescript structure. From here to Bettws-y-Coed the country became for once in a way level. Just before reaching that well-known village, we turned on one side to see the quaint old bridge of Pont-y-Pair. What artist who has ever visited Wales has not made a sketch of it? Of all Welsh bridges this one is pre-eminent for its picturesqueness and for the beauty of its surroundings. It was erected in the fifteenth century by a native mason, named Howel. It is a most solid and

substantial structure, and consists of four fine irregular arches, built on bold, rocky projections. It spans the turbulent river Llugwy, which here makes its last fall over some finely shaped rocks, a cluster of which forms a miniature island mid-stream and has upon it some fir-trees growing. It is the last cascade the Llugwy makes, for it shortly joins the more placid waters of the Conway, which from this point journey peacefully to the sea. The bridge is covered with ivy, which falls down in festoons on either side of the same. On the occasion of our visit there were at least half-a-dozen artists, amateur and otherwise, at work, sketching and painting the old structure in crayons, water and oil colours, and I have no doubt, on any fine day in the summer-time, as many may be found there.

Remounting the carriage, we drove up to the Royal Oak, the hostelrie made so famous by David Cox. It is a large, modern hotel now, albeit a very comfortable one, very different to the humble little roadside inn of Cox's time. It was the sign-board to this inn that that famous artist painted—I believe in part payment for his bill. A man whose pictures now fetch thousands giving the product of his easel for the sign-board, exposed to all weathers, of what was little better than a roadside public!

When we were there, a lawsuit was going on as to the possession of this relic of David Cox, costing probably many more pounds than he was credited shillings for the whole thing. It is the old story: the world knows not its greatest men, at least artists, while they are alive. Unfortunately,

the Royal Oak was full, as were the other hotels in the place, so we were obliged, after baiting our horses, to continue on our way, and to make another stage. We were not altogether sorry to be obliged to do this, for Bettws-y-Coed was full of tourists and trippers, there being a railway station at this lovely spot, which disgorges from time to time the contents of crowded excursion trains from Liverpool, Chester, and other large towns. However beautiful a place may be in itself—and, truth to say, Bettws, as it is more generally called for brevity, is about as sweet a village as can be imagined, situated in a splendid country—it cannot stand the noisy, vulgar crowds of our large cities without being spoilt.

The sun was setting behind the purple hills in a mass of rubies and gold when we drove away from the door of the Royal Oak, and we looked forward with no little pleasure to the delights of a summer evening's drive. It was moonlight then, so we knew, if we were belated on our way, we should have her mellow light for guidance and for company. And to drive through a beautiful country, a country of mountain, hill and dale, and river, by the peaceful moonlight, could anything be more delightful or more romantic?

CHAPTER XI.

Pentre-Voelas—Old Welsh Bridges—An Ancient Stone—A Moorland Drive—Corwen—Hats—The Sort of People to Travel—The First Suspension Bridge—Our Forefathers and Ourselves—The Vale of Llangollen—A very Antique Bridge—Iron *versus* Stone—Castell Dinas Bran—Valle Crusis Abbey—A Country of Waterfalls—The Conway Falls—A Rough Scramble—The Fairy Glen—Llanrwst—Llandudno—The Royal Cambrian Academy—A Breezy Town—The Great Orme's Head—St. Tudno's Chapel—Beauty and the Beast (in bridges)—An Old House—Conway Town and Castle.

From Bettws-y-Coed to Pentre-Voelas, a distance of seven miles, it was stiff collar-work all the way; but a more beautiful drive we had not on the whole of our tour. About two miles on our stage we arrived at the small wayside hostelrie of the Conway Falls Inn, where we pulled up to admire a most extensive view of the Lledr Valley, which ended in a glorious panorama of Welsh mountains, all the chief peaks being visible, their summits lighted up by the setting sun; it was a splendid prospect. From this spot, to within half a mile of Pentre-Voelas, our road ran alongside a rocky river, overhung nearly all the way with trees, whose foliage caused a dense shade. The stream made continual cascades from rocky ledge to rocky ledge the whole of the distance, while here and there a bright, gleaming pool shone out through the surrounding darkness. In several places fine old bridges spanned the stream, grey and many-tinted

with lichen and mosses, and some were almost covered with ivy and various creepers. I know nothing finer in their way than these old one-arched Welsh bridges : they are exquisite in shape, bold in design, perfect in colour, and if by chance an old fisherman or an ancient shepherd should be seen crossing over one, the picture is complete. A short distance before Pentre-Voelas is a large stone standing upright, with a Latin inscription, stating that the spot on which it is raised marks the resting-place of the body of Llewellyn-ap-Seicyllt, Prince of Wales, who was killed here in the year 1021. About half a mile before we arrived at our destination we emerged from out of our sheltered and somewhat dark road, for it was now evening, into a bleak, barren moorland, and great was the contrast. At the edge of the moor, and pretending to be sheltered by a few miserable, wind-swept trees, was our hotel. We felt rather anxious as to whether or not we should be able to find quarters for the night here, as it was late when we arrived, and both ourselves and our steeds were tired with our long day's work. We saw one or two sportsmen with dogs, and fishermen with their rods, standing around the doorway, chatting doubtless of their morning's exploits, and we almost expected to be told that the inn was full. Had it been so, I hardly know what we should have done, for our horses were in need of rest. However, fortune smiled upon us ; we learnt there were still rooms to spare, and as for stabling, the stalls were all untenanted, and we soon found ourselves sitting down to an excellent spread tea. And after a long journey,

how refreshing is that cosy, old-fashioned, homely meal of our forefathers! A regular substantial repast it is, with chops, eggs, cold meats, &c., &c.—none of your make-believes, with a simple tray and teapot and a dish of thin bread and butter. Very good is such for an afternoon kettledrum in town, but after a long drive through the bracing and appetising air of Wales something a good deal more substantial is required. The atmosphere upon this elevated spot was simply delicious, invigorating, and life-giving; after sleeping a night in it, we felt fit to go anywhere and do anything. We had a delightful drive next day on to Corwen, across a splendid moorland country, beyond which we had glorious views of many hills, rising one over the other till lost in the haze of the far-off distance, with peeps here and there of mountain peaks rising proudly over all. What an idea of unlimited space do not the moors give—the open sea alone can compare to them in this respect—and what magnificent cloudscapes, too, do they not afford to the traveller who will but look at them! It is strange how few do so. Fine, white, rolling clouds, with delicate pearly-grey shadings, kept passing before us, now slowly and anon quickly changing their shapes, now apparently melting away, again reappearing in a different form, then coiling and twisting one with another, always changing, never at rest. Presently they appeared to ravel themselves into a bewildering maze of cloudlets, with peeps between of the pure blue sky above. Surely the scenery of cloudland is worth observing.

Corwen we found to be a dull, uninteresting town,

built under the shelter of a craggy mountain, with an ancient and uncanny-looking church and churchyard, but it could boast of a fairly good hotel. We usually dined at our mid-day halt if we found it at all possible to do so, on the principle that it was as well to get a good dinner when we could, for, travelling across country as we did, it was a luxury not always to be obtained, and if we missed an opportunity we might not have another the same day. And though I am by no means over-fastidious, or the least bit of a gourmand, still I can see no merit in roughing it for the sake of roughing it, or in eating badly-cooked food if you can avoid it. It is well not to be over-particular, but it is well also to take care of yourself when you are able to do so. A man who can appreciate a good dinner when he gets it, and can rough it when necessary, and enjoy both the good things he gets and the reverse, he is the one to travel.

A man who perpetually grumbles when he cannot have what is unreasonable to expect in the quarters he is in should undoubtedly stay at home, and a man who cannot rough it, aye, and enjoy the roughing of it, too, when necessary, should do the same ; though, as I have said before, there is no merit in roughing it when such is not obligatory. Moral : Live well when you are able ; when you cannot do so be satisfied with what you can have, and never grumble when people do their best for you, even if you do not get everything just and how you like. You cannot carry your home, its conveniences and comforts, on your back ; it is always as well to remember that.

We noticed on the table of the hotel here a small dish, locally called 'hats'—we had only seen the same once before on all our travels. They are really small tarts, just enough for one, baked in a small china dish shaped like an old Welsh hat, turned, of course, upside down. The advantages of these are, you obtain your share of fruit and crust, and get it hot, and there is no wretched-looking, cut and mangled cold tarts, with much crust and little fruit, so often left on country hotel tables for lunch, &c., ghastly relics of past feasts.

From Corwen to Llangollen the country is as beautiful as it is possible for a country to be. Hill and dale, mountain and river, pine forests and waterfalls make scenery that is simply enchanting. The road appeared to be but little used at the present day, the railway having now usurped all the traffic, much to the loss of travellers—at least, for such as care for the picturesque. Fortunately, how much they miss they probably little know, and is there not an old proverb to the effect that 'what the eye does not see the heart does not grieve for'? However, we could not but heartily pity them, being whisked and whirled through tunnels and cuttings deep down in the vale below, without obtaining even a single glance of all this bewildering beauty. Our forefathers, journeying in the same direction, fared very differently from the present traveller by rail. If he proceeded somewhat slower, he certainly was more than recompensed for the fact by the glorious prospect and sights he had all around him; and then, probably, he was in no such feverish hurry as his descendants are, so

the old method of conveyance suited him well. Of course, now railways are *un fait accompli*, knowing all their conveniences and despatch, we could never do without them, nor could we ever put up with the old slow mail-coach, though it was not considered a slow affair in its day. Still, while we gain much we lose much. Had railways never been invented, I wonder, would the world really be much worse off? At first blush this appears a ridiculous question, to which, of course, there could be but one reply. The political economist would, of course, answer without a moment's consideration—yes; but I am by no means sure he would be right. There are always two sides to every question; it is as well to bear that in mind. Railways have made and added enormously to our vast cities, without which they could not exist, in their present unwieldy size. They have caused great wealth and great poverty. Owing to them, competition all over the world is very great, and the strain both upon energy and brain to keep pace with the unlimited and growing competition is excessively severe, and telling to mind and constitution. Such a draft upon the vital energies of man has never before been known or felt. Will the succeeding generation and others still unborn suffer?—that is a pertinent question.

Shortly before Llangollen we came across an old chain bridge, a very curious and quaint structure leading over a river to a picturesque half-timbered hotel. This bridge has a history, and a notable history it is too, though in itself it may appear to the casual traveller a very humble and poor affair.

But this bridge was the first ever built upon the suspension principle. The original one, for it has been renewed from time to time, was erected long years ago, and consisted of two rude chains stretched tightly across the stream; these supported wooden planks, and hand-rails for protection on either side completed the structure. That was all, but it formed a useful, strong, and serviceable bridge, and was the parent of the more modern suspension one, which really is only a modification of this simple and, if you will, primitive expedient. Simple it certainly is, but then simplicity is the perfection of engineering.

Knowing the history of this rude structure, I was speaking in praise of it to a visitor we met at the hotel; he evidently thought little of it, and took the trouble to have a cheap sneer at our ancestors respecting the same. Certainly, compared to our modern engineering feats, it does not appear much to boast about. But then some of the earliest locomotives, prior to Robert Stephenson's time—who, by the way, only greatly improved upon the earlier models, and did not actually invent the iron horse—were very rude and clumsy affairs indeed; notice, for instance, the 'Puffing Billy' in the Patent Museum, South Kensington. But, for all that, they contained the germ of our present magnificent engines; without these first attempts the perfection of to day could not have been obtained. So with everything; there must be a beginning, and the originator of a new idea, if of value, deserves far more credit than one who simply improves upon it. We must always remember, our ancestors have done everything for

us, we have done nothing for them; all we have and nearly all we know we owe to our forefathers, therefore it hardly becomes us to sneer at them.

The vale of Llangollen is famed for its scenery, and it deserves all that has been said in praise of it. We went out in the evening to inspect the place, and our first visit was to the old bridge; this is a very ancient structure, and originally, no doubt, a very handsome one. It has, however, been spoilt by widening, and having an additional arch added to it, for the accommodation of the railway. It is stated to have been built by John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, in the year 1346; but many archæologists have considered it to be a much older structure, and in support of their theory in altering it (which is synonymous with spoiling it) a stone was found built into the main arch, with the initials W. S. in quaint old letters, and the date or figures 1131 upon it. So there is some probability, at any rate, that this fine old bridge is of very great age. Our forefathers built well, and not for their time alone. This ancient structure is as strong and firm as when the first conveyance went over it, and appears as though it would last for generations to come yet. It has seen kingdoms rise and fall; it has outlasted empires. It seems to me as though we make a great mistake in the present day in using so much iron in our bridges, especially in railway ones. This certainly is an age of iron, and we appear to use that metal whenever practicable, neglecting stone almost altogether. It should be remembered that iron rusts, and that the very best of iron girders may very

possibly contain unseen flaws, which may materially weaken an otherwise sound structure; there is, besides, to be considered the ever-recurring strains caused by the variations of temperature on a large mass of metal. A stone bridge, once built, requires little or no care; an iron one must, however, be watched from time to time, in order to see that all the bolts, rivets, &c., are secure; it must be periodically painted, or it will rust away; seeing to all of which is a continual and lasting expense, and if it be not done, an iron bridge is not a safe one. Of course, there are numerous instances where the spans are so great, and for other causes, it is an absolute necessity to employ iron; but there are hundreds of bridges, as I have noticed from time to time on our travels, built of that metal, where stone ones could have been as easily and as inexpensively erected. Would any iron bridge last for long over a thousand years, as many Roman ones have done, some even in this country, and, in spite of time and wear and tear in days past, are still at this moment as strong and perfect as the hour they were finished? I trow not.

But to return to the quaint old Llangollen bridge. This used to be considered in olden times one of the wonders of Wales; though what there is, or could have been, extraordinary or uncommon about it, we utterly failed to discover. Another lion of the place, and a worthy lion too, is Castell Dinas Bran. This ruined fortress stands upon a curiously steep, solitary, and conical hill, keeping watch and ward as it were over the little town. In

its day it must have been almost impregnable. This castle is unique amongst Welsh castles in having no history; tradition has handed down neither the name of the builder, nor does it give any account as to when, how, or by whom it was destroyed—a rather strange fact, considering this old stronghold, judging from its position and extensive remains, must have been of no small importance.

The next thing of interest we inspected was Valle Crusis Abbey. Little, however, now is left of the old monastic fane, but still sufficient to show how beautiful it must have been in its prime. It appears from its architecture to have been much of the same style and date as Tintern, the ruins, like those of that venerable abbey, being beautifully ornamented, the details of the carvings being exquisite. It is sad to think that this once sacred pile should now be condemned to the base usages of a farm-building.

We retraced our road from Llangollen as far as Bettws-y-Coed. Some few miles past Corwen, we noticed a stream making a fine fall of some sixty feet or more in a grand gorge, which was spanned at the top by a beautiful old bridge. What a country Wales is for falls and old bridges! At this spot, too, we observed what we had noticed more than once before on our drive through the Principality, namely, a view-recess built out from the wall of the road by the engineer of the same, for the traveller's benefit—a thoughtfulness and concession we gratefully appreciated.

At the Conway Falls Inn we pulled up and descended to see the cascade of that name. We had a long scramble to it, but could easily make out our direction, as we could both see and hear the water tumbling. Here, as at the Swallow Falls, we found a small wicket in the hedge, near to which stood a girl knitting. We hardly knew whether there was a right of road here or not, but the damsel appeared to expect something for opening the gate, so we gave her a sixpence, and asked, for curiosity, and to see what remark she would make, if that was enough. She replied, No, and said she wanted more, although we thought it very doubtful whether she had a right to demand anything at all, as there was no notice-board or sign of any kind to show that this was a private way, and before now we had found people open a wicket in a public thoroughfare as though it were a private road, and pretending to be connected with the place without any authority whatever. Anyhow, we were so annoyed at her cool reply, that we told her to give us back the sixpence, adding that we would not go to the falls ; she, however, stuck to the money, and we proceeded on our way after giving her a mild lecture upon her conduct, and feeling rather annoyed at what had occurred. The Conway Falls disappointed us, but they were the only falls in Wales that did so; neither in themselves nor their surroundings are they nearly so fine as the many others we had seen, and a salmon ladder built close by helps to mar the effect of the scene. From the elevated position of the roadside inn where we

had stopped the phaeton, we had endeavoured to trace our way from this spot, along the mountain-side and through the woods to the Fairy Glen, a charming sylvan retreat near Bettws-y-Coed; but, from our distant inspection of the country, we did not feel quite certain as to whether or not we should be able to accomplish the walk. However, we took our horn with us, and told our man to listen, and, if we sounded a blast, to take the horses on to 'Bettws,' and await us there. On nearer inspection of the ground, we thought we might risk the venture, so we tootled our horn from a clearance in the woods, and watched the result from where we stood, for we could see the carriage plainly against the sky line, though our groom could hardly have distinguished us, hidden as we were by the dense foliage around. Presently we saw him raise his whip, the signal agreed upon to show that he heard us, and the horses began to move. So we proceeded on our way, though we by no means felt certain as to whether or not we should succeed, as, though very picturesque and romantic, it was by no means an easy country to traverse, there being several streams to ford, and various woods with thick undergrowth to push our way through, besides some few fences to be surmounted. But we determined to venture, and to trust to our usual good-fortune, which so seldom deserted us. I can only describe the track we took for the greater portion of our journey as being more like a superannuated watercourse than anything else. But, in spite of all obstacles, in due time we arrived safely at our desti-

nation, after one of the most enjoyable, if somewhat rough, scrambles imaginable. The Fairy Glen proved to be a charming spot in itself, and a most delightful retreat. It is a ravine with wall-like rocks on either side, all ivy-covered and roofed with overhanging trees and green foliage. At the foot of the ravine the river forms a secluded, tranquil pool, with moss-covered boulders all about, affording resting places for the foot of the beholder. This peaceful glen would have been simply enchanting, if—alas! that little word 'if,' what a difference does it not make to many things in this world!—if, as I have said, we could have had the place to ourselves, but there was a party of some twenty or more tourists climbing everywhere, and shouting to each other from here and there; thus all idea of romance was rudely taken away. There were, too, three artists hard at work, and these, unfortunately, monopolised the best points of view. Paintings of this spot sell, I was told, very readily. In fact, I was informed that a certain artist of the neighbourhood, who shall be nameless, had married and brought up a family on the Fairy Glen! We next proceeded to find the phaeton, and discovered it waiting for us on the Waterloo Bridge, an iron structure over the Conway, and which, by an inscription upon it, we learnt was erected in the same year that the famous battle of that name was fought. It is, perhaps, the only ugly and unpaintable bridge in Wales, railway ones excepted.

From Bettws-y-Coed we drove down the valley of the Conway to Llanrwst, a primitive market-

town, of but little interest in itself, though beautifully situated. As we proceeded the vale gradually widened, the bordering mountain peaks became rounded hills, and the country grew richer; comfortable-looking farmyards with stacks around came into sight, accompanied by fields and hedges and meadows, within which latter Lowland cattle were peacefully grazing. Altogether it was quite a scenic transformation; the country looked more like a bit of an English Midland county than a portion of wild Wales. It was a landscape in repose. The river was tranquil here; no rapids, no boulders or torrents ruffled or checked its quiet, sedate course. All was home-like and restful; not solitary, wild, and warlike. Borne on the breeze came the delicious perfume of new-mown hay, and the cheery sounds of scythes sharpening, for all around the haymakers were busily at work. The faded brown of the withered crops made by contrast the grass underneath look doubly fresh and of a most vivid green.

From our hotel at Llanrwst we looked directly upon the river and a particularly fine old bridge of three arches, the centre one being much wider and higher than the other two, and giving thereby a decided character to the bridge, although its being so constructed caused the road to be considerably raised in the middle, making it a rather stiff pull up and down to drive over. It was designed by Inigo Jones, the famous Welsh architect. We were told by our worthy landlady that there was a strange peculiarity about this bridge, namely, that if you bumped yourself against the key-stone on either

side of the large arch, the structure would visibly shake. We, however, did not test it, and, in reality, thought no more about the matter till after we had left the town, when we were seriously told by other inhabitants of the vale that it was a fact. If so, this bridge, rather than the one at Llangollen, should, without doubt, be considered one of the wonders of Wales. So, kind reader, should you ever be in this part of the world, you can bump the bridge for yourself; but I cannot guarantee, if you do so, that it will either shake or tremble at the blow. I simply tell you what I was told. Respecting this structure, we were asked rather a good riddle, which I will repeat here. Supposing Llanrwst bridge was to tumble into the river, what would it say? Answer: 'In I go, Jones,' (Inigo Jones). Llanrwst used to be noted for the manufacture of harps; now, the day for these being past, it has no speciality, and possesses nothing of interest to the traveller save its very ancient church, which contains several fine and interesting monuments and quaint brasses, chiefly, if not wholly, to the memory of the Wynn family, of Gwydir Castle, near by. There is also to be seen here a huge stone coffin, removed, it is said, from the old abbey of Conway, and which is stated to have contained the body of Llewellyn-ap-Jorwerth, son-in-law of King John. It is entire and in a good state of preservation.

Next day we continued our journey down the Conway valley till we reached the spot where the river found its last home in the restless sea. From the roadway here we had a fine view of the old

town and castle of Conway, which, however, as we intended to visit later on, we did not trouble to see now, but proceeded straight on and along the narrow peninsula which joins the Great Orme's Head to the mainland of the famous watering-place of Llandudno. How gloriously fresh and bracing did not the cool and welcome breezes seem as they came to us directly from off the ocean! The very horses sniffed them, and appeared thoroughly to enjoy the salt-borne air. They became quite frisky, and it was as much as we could do to keep them steady at the hotel door whilst our traps were being unpacked. I am sure animals derive benefit, as well as human beings, from change of air; change of scene man alone can, of course, appreciate.

We amused ourselves that afternoon by walking about and inspecting the place and the shops. How gay and alluring did these latter not appear to us, after being so long away from such attractions! I am ashamed to state how much good coin of the realm we were tempted to disgorge in making purchases of photographs of Welsh scenery, some of which were very beautiful, and various other gimcracks useful and useless, mostly, however, the latter. How enticing shops are after a long absence from such luxuries! We inspected, too, the Royal Cambrian Academy, holden here for the first time. A short quarter of an hour, however, more than sufficed us there; such a collection of mediocre pictures may it never be our lot to see gathered together again. If the Royal Cambrian Academy—what a high-sounding title!—cannot make a better show,

they had better not attempt any more exhibitions. It is as well to be able to walk before trying to run.

Llandudno is a curiously situated town, and for those who want an unlimited supply of sea-air, it must be a very paradise. Being built upon a peninsula, you have the briny on two sides of you, and let the wind blow either way, you are bound to have sea-breezes, and across this narrow, exposed strip of land the wind *can* blow at times. In fact, we found the breezes rather trying; you can have too much even of a good thing.

The next day we devoted wholly to the chief attraction of Llandudno, the magnificent drive round the mighty Great Orme's Head, which grand promontory stands boldly forth, surrounded almost by the sea. This wonderful and unequalled road has been cut and blasted out of the solid rock, and runs along the precipitous sides of the cliffs, forming, perhaps, altogether the finest marine drive in the world, affording as it does, besides a splendid and ever-varying ocean prospect, seldom without shipping, an extensive panorama of mountain heights and bold headlands, the former comprising all the principal Welsh peaks. This wave-worn, sea-girt, gigantic headland, barren and treeless, against which the surges beat everlastingly, is one of those grand sights, those sublime creations of nature, which, once seen, is for ever afterwards impressed upon the memory. The waves dash and fret against the iron-bound coast, making a border all around of milk-white foam, and in the course of ages they have by their ceaseless action worn out many a gloomy

cavern. Here, too, the sea breezes are to be had in perfection; the keen wind, in fact, blew up from far below some stray spray right into our faces; our lips actually tasted of the sea brine. And ever and anon the plaintive cry of the sea-gull was borne to us upon the breeze. We could see numbers of those wild, storm-loving birds whirling around at the foot of the cliffs, now darting swiftly downwards to the waters after their prey, now momentarily disappearing in some sea-worn cave, only to reappear again as suddenly. This is a place which, to see in perfection, should be viewed when the winter storms are raging, and the winds are blowing loud and strong. Then, how the restless waves must fume and boil and seethe in their rage and fury against the immovable cliffs! What a contrast it must be from the steadfast, still, proud promontory, to see the agitated, unquiet, storm-tossed waters foaming and fretting in their anger against the calm, unyielding headland! Yet, though the headland may be firm and unmoved, still, for all that, in storms, we were told, the fierce breakers make very ducks and drakes of the masses of loose rocks and stones that lie along the foot of the crags; they hurl and crush them one against another, and play bowls with the huge boulders of many tons, as though they were mere bits of cork, to be tossed about as they pleased. But above all, what impressed us the most was the strange, uncanny, moaning sounds made by the waves as they broke and rushed into the many caverns; they struck us as being altogether uncommonly weird and eerie. The noises are caused by the compressed air being forced

out by the overwhelming power of the waves through narrow fissures and crevices; they sounded most unearthly, and an imaginative mind might easily conceive they came from imprisoned demons condemned to dwell for ever in the gloomy recesses far below.

> And such the strange mysterious din
> At times throughout these caverns roll'd,
> And such the fearful wonders told
> Of restless sprites imprisoned there,
> That bold the fisher who would dare,
> At twilight hour, to steer his skiff
> Beneath the wizard's lonely cliff.

About half-way round the drive a footpath, which we duly climbed, leads to the quaint little church of St. Tudno. The edifice was originally built in the eleventh century, but has been much restored—in fact almost rebuilt. It is placed in a very bleak and desolate situation, and is exposed to all the fury of the elements. Whatever a church was built here at all for was to us a mystery, for on this barren waste there could have been but few or any inhabitants at any time. In it are to be seen a very curious and ancient round font, also two incised, stone coffin-lids of very early date, and that is all; but the lonely and strange situation of this simple, lowly structure, dedicated to the worship of God, impressed us very much. It was near here one dark winter's night that the ship *Hornby*, of Liverpool, was dashed to pieces on the cruel rocks below. The disaster happened long years ago, but the history of the wreck is still fresh with the old salts of the place. It appears some fishermen, in the morning, walking along the top

of the cliffs, came upon the exhausted form of a sailor. After helping to revive him, they questioned him as to how he had got where he was, and as to the state he was in. He told them he was the only survivor of the ship *Hornby*, which had been wrecked on the rocks below during the night, and that he had been thrown from the fore-mast somehow on to the face of the cliffs, and by almost superhuman efforts he had managed to climb their precipitous sides and thus arrive on the surface of the same. The fishermen at first could not credit his story, but on looking down, far below, they beheld the evidence of its truth, for there was the helpless wreck, over which the breakers were wildly dashing, and crushing it still further to pieces on the relentless rocks. Anyone viewing the steep and awful nature of the precipices where this disaster occurred may well wonder how ever the poor half-drowned, half-stunned sailor ever accomplished his terrible climbing feat. It is astonishing what man can do and endure when dear life depends upon his doing it and enduring.

From Llandudno we drove to Conway, a dear old-fashioned place, still enclosed by the castle walls, and giving one more the impression of what these old feudal, fortified towns in past times were like than any other place I know of. We crossed the estuary of the river Conway by Telford's beautiful chain bridge, under the very shadow of the castle. This bridge is built in the style of the ancient stronghold, and appears more like a drawbridge belonging to the main structure than an altogether different erection. And this is the right way to

build; eye and heart are pleased and no one suffers. Taste in engineering, where possible (it is not always so, unfortunately), and in designing various necessary structures, so that they may be in harmony with their surroundings, is not necessarily more expensive than ugliness. And, speaking of another important matter, it is just as easy and costs nothing extra—nay, often it is actually more economical—to have our homes artistically furnished and decorated, to have them livable and beautiful, than ugly and commonplace. Ugliness under the cloak of utility has already had a long and weary reign. May the dawn of a new era soon commence! Here, also, Stephenson's tubular abomination crosses the estuary side by side with Telford's graceful and beautiful structure—and, oh! the contrast—the former by its gaunt ugliness spoiling, as far as it is possible to spoil, the beauty of the scene. If only Stephenson had kept his hideous railway-tunnel bridge, or whatever is the proper title for the nondescript erection, somewhat further away from such a historical and picturesque spot, which could easily have been done, it would have been a good thing for everybody, and the fine view of the grand old ruins from this, the best, point, would not have been irretrievably spoilt. But then, nothing is sacred to a railway engineer, or sapper. I am afraid, as we drove along, we did not bless Stephenson; but we doubly appreciated the genius of Telford, who, being obliged to carry his road over here, did his best to make it as little objectionable as possible—in fact, he really has added, if anything, to the beauty of the scene by

his harmonious structure. The tubular bridge has been defended on the score of usefulness, utility again being made the cloak to cover the sins of ugliness. It would, however, have been equally as useful had it been built farther up the river, and not placed right under the very castle walls as it is; and, besides, there was no necessity to have erected such an uncompromisingly ugly affair. If he had felt obliged to build it where he did, he should have followed Telford's lead, and have endeavoured to make the lines, at any rate, of his 'perfectly ugly structure' somewhat more in keeping with its surroundings.

We found a charming old-fashioned inn in the town, with old-fashioned fare and old-fashioned prices; an inn quite in keeping with the old-world look of the place. Conway has suffered less than most towns from 'improvement' manias, and so has fortunately preserved much of its pleasing and ancient features, many quaint old timbered houses still remaining, some of which are of great interest. One, Plas Manor, or the 'Great House,' is especially worthy of a visit. It was built in the year 1585—at least, it has that date carved upon it—by one of the Wynns of Gwydir, a family that appear in times past to have had much influence and importance in this portion of the kingdom. Like Haddon and Hardwick Halls, and other mansions of that period, this relic of past times is of great value in giving one a very fair idea of the domestic architecture and economy of those days. The rooms are spacious, well-proportioned, with fine old panelled walls and quaint old carvings; amongst these latter

the initials R. W., doubtless of Robert Wynn, the founder, frequently occur, and as well, in various places, are two other initials, viz. E. R. and R. D. Tradition says these letters are intended for those of Queen Elizabeth, and her powerful favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Whether there is any truth in the tradition I cannot say; probably the initials were intended for totally different persons, although the mansion must in its day have been one of the finest in the kingdom, and there is nothing unreasonable in supposing that the Virgin Queen and her gallant courtier may have been guests here, excepting that history is silent upon the matter. It struck us, on looking over this old house, as it has while viewing others in various parts of the country, that modern architects might study with advantage some of the works of former days. I am well aware that it has often been remarked that the halls and rooms of these old places look bare and uncomfortable, although in proportion and detail they certainly appear very perfect. I wonder what such people imagine a modern builder's house of the present day would look like, if it had been uninhabited and uncared for during a period of a couple of centuries or so, or say for even fifty years. Devoid of furniture, with the damp running down the walls, the paint all decayed and gone, the papering long ago mouldered away, the plaster ornaments all cracked and broken, and discoloured, and the floors and doors—well, perhaps it will be as well to enquire no further. I trow it would not be a very edifying spectacle.

Our next visit was to the castle. This fine old fortress, designed by the same architect who planned the magnificent pile of Carnarvon, if not quite equal in grandeur to that edifice, is certainly not behind it in historical interest, and its situation is even bolder and more picturesque than that of its rival. One peculiarity of Henry de Elreton's castles, the light, elegant watch-towers, which surmount each of the main ones, struck us as being a most effective addition to the latter, and, whilst adding much to the grace and charm of his strongholds, being of real service and assistance in times of war, forming, as they did, most perfect outlooks. It would be too long here to relate all our impressions of this noble old stronghold; suffice to say, what pleased us most, after the grand banqueting-hall, was the exquisite architecture of Queen Eleanor's private oratory, built at that most perfect time, architecturally speaking, when the early English was being brought to perfection by being merged into the decorative style. The oriel window here is a real gem in its way; perfect in proportion (a quality in which modern architecture fails lamentably), perfect in detail, nothing of the kind could be finer. In it simplicity and beauty are combined. The roof, too, with its elaborated fretted carvings is a marvel of decorated stonework. The entrance to the castle was flanked on either side by two massive, circular, embattled towers; called respectively the King's and the Queen's towers; from each of these rises a light, but sufficiently strong, machicolated watch-tower. Here King Edward and his

good queen, accompanied by a host of English nobles, spent one Christmas-tide, with great pomp and state, and in truly royal style.

We could still easily trace, by the unevenness of the ground on the south side of the castle, where the stern soldiers of the Commonwealth had dug their trenches and placed their cannon, and the walls of the fortress bear evidence to this day of the damage done by the besiegers' artillery, though not of a very serious nature. We wandered long and lovingly about the old ruins. The pomp and splendour of the old days have gone from them for ever; the gallant lords and fair dames of high degree, the dauntless knights all clad in glittering mail, who once held high revel and wassail here, have long since gone to their rest. Peace be with them! But still we felt, as we stood on the topmost tower's topmost height, we looked upon much the same landscape they looked upon, the river flowed past us as it flowed past them, the mountains were the same they saw, the sea has changed not, and so we gradually fell into a pleasant reverie. But it was not to be, alas! of long duration, for as at Carnarvon so here, only nearer here than there, we were rudely awakened out of our meditations by a shrill whistle and a rushing sound as of thunder, accompanied by a cloud of steam and a whirlwind of dust. It was the Irish Mail, speeding its lightning course beneath the very castle walls. The knights of old never witnessed a sight like that!

CHAPTER XII.

Penmaenmawr Headland—A Terrific Pass—An Exciting Drive—A Quiet Village—Aber Waterfall—A Beautiful Evening—Up the Conway Valley—Trout Fishing from a House—A Fine Cascade—We make Unexpected Friends—A Carriage a Passport when Travelling—A Mineral Spa—Trefriw—An Old-fashioned Inn—Good Company—Artists—An Old Church—Llyn Cravnant—Tea by the Lake-side—Sketching Excursions—Anecdotes of Artists—The Lledr Valley—A Primitive Bridge—Dolwyddelan—An Old Ruined Castle—A Wild and Hilly Road—Friends in a Wilderness—Slate Quarries—Festiniog—A Dog Guide—Cynfael Falls—Hugh Lloyd's Pulpit—The Maiden's Lake—A Legend—A Savage Ravine—Old Roman Bridge—Bala Lake—Old-fashioned Comfort.

We had a splendid drive that afternoon along by the coast and round the famous headland of Penmaenmawr, a mighty mass of crystalline rock presenting to the ocean an almost perpendicular front. The road is cut and blasted along the precipitous side of the mountain, whose peak when we passed it was hidden in clouds, its boulder-strewn foot being washed by the stormy waves. There is the road and the railway between the crags and the shore, but in one place there is only room for the road, so that the iron way has to burrow itself under the mighty cliffs and get along as best it can. Of course, it disappears in the darkness of a tunnel at the very point where the scenery is the grandest and most sublime. Poor railway travellers! it is always thus with them. Before the present road was made, a narrow, steep, and

highly dangerous zigzag track, unprotected by walls of any kind, was the only way over this stupendous mountain headland. It was in those days a truly terrific pass, and many disastrous accidents occurred upon it; travellers frequently lost their lives in crossing over, and nervous ones often turned back rather than encounter the very real and formidable dangers of the same. A century or so ago there were two little inns, situated one on either side of the mountain; on the signboard of the first was inscribed :—

> Before you venture here to pass,
> Take a good refreshing glass;

and on the other—

> Now you're over, take another,
> Your drooping spirits to recover.

These couplets are said to have been composed by the witty Dean Smith, who once was a traveller this way. Ben Jonson is said to have crossed Penmaenmawr, and to have nearly lost his life in so doing. How different is it all now when Telford's capital road takes one along so easily and so safely, and yet, although the way is so easy, the scenery has lost none of its stupendous grandeur. The road takes one safely along, I said; but, in fact, we had rather an exciting drive. The winter storms and frost loosen from time to time the rocks and stones on the mountain's surface; these, becoming detached by the heavy gale blowing, were dashing down now and again along the steep slope of the same, and we had to drive close to the side of the cliffs, so that the fragments might clear our heads. At times we underwent

quite a cannonade, but, owing to the shelter of the crags, we luckily escaped unhurt. The incident, however, allowed us to realise how dangerous the old path over the hill must have been in the olden time, being far more exposed than the present way, and presenting no protection whatever to the unfortunate traveller.

We found the village of Penmaenmawr to be a rising watering-place, with an excellent hotel and finely situated, facing due north, and therefore possessing a most bracing air. We have but few seaside resorts with a northern exposure, and therefore cool and invigorating in summer. It, however, had not much attraction for us. The mountains in the rear of this spot are being spoilt by the extensive quarrying that is carried on upon them ; they consist mainly of hard, blue trap rock, and which, duly split into suitable sizes, is in great demand for paving stones. So, after being almost untrodden by the foot of man, the rock, now transferred to the pavements of our large cities, is being continually tramped over. From here we drove on to Aber, a peaceful little seaside village with no pretence whatever of being a watering-place. Long may it retain its natural, innocent look ; it is situated at the entrance to a romantic glen, at the head of which we were told was a very fine fall. As there was only a foot-path up this glen, we left the phaeton under the shelter of some trees close by a charming old rustic bridge, and proceeded on our way. Surely this is the land of waterfalls ; hardly a day had passed lately without our seeing one or more cascades. We had

a delightful, though somewhat rough, walk of some two miles up a charming valley. Our road took us most of the way alongside of a sparkling rivulet, as clear as crystal, which gambolled along its pebbly bed in a quiet, musical fashion. The valley ended abruptly in a fine amphitheatre of dark, precipitous mountains; and over these, from the bleak moorlands and heights above, a considerable stream comes dashing down, divided by the rocks at the top, but afterwards uniting and forming a grand cascade. Altogether, the scene was one of great and secluded beauty. There was not a sound to be heard save the roaring and splashing of the falling waters, not a living creature was visible but ourselves, not as much as a lonely sheep or a solitary bird, not even a human habitation; we were for the time completely isolated from the outer world. We were very pleased with this spot; the romantic approach to it, its seclusion, its happy combination of wood, rock, mountain, and falling water, made it one of the most pleasing sights we had witnessed, even amongst the many we had seen since our journey began.

From here we returned to Penmaenmawr, where we spent the night, and in the evening from the elevated height of our hotel garden we enjoyed the grand view of sea and mountains that lay spread out before and beneath us. The sun was slowly sinking to his rest in the far-off West; the parting light, as though loth to leave so fair a scene, rested lovingly upon the Great Orme's Head and many other lower heights, and lit up the countless crests of the ever-restless waves as they rolled shorewards and home-

wards along. A few fishing-boats with their dark, tanned, picturesque sails were tossing about nearer the land, whilst far away on the distant horizon, we could dimly make out the shapes of mighty ships voyaging outwards and returning inward-bound ladened to their several havens; one large steamer, a trans-Atlantic liner, probably from Liverpool, steering westward, was walking the ocean like a thing of life. Silvery-grey tints of the most delicate tone were everywhere in shadow, the gleaming light lingered long upon the topmost peaks after all the rest of the scene was lost in shade, only here and there a suggestion of reflected gold told where the waves were breaking on the shore, making a mass of light amber-coloured foam, half-revealing the half-hidden line of the coast. Then the stars one by one came out, as the daylight died, and lastly the moon, sweet queen of the night, made her appearance, forming a path of light upon the moving waters, against which the fishing boats told out in the darkest relief. It was an attractive scene; mountain and sea, sky and land, were all bathed in a soft silvery mellow light, a light no artist has ever yet been able faithfully to reproduce—nature alone can paint such a picture, the tints are matchless with earthy pigments. All the world seemed at sleep and at rest; there was a solemn, peaceful silence everywhere; the only sounds that came to us were the measured wash of the surf beating upon the shore, and the plaintive cry of some belated sea-gulls, and that was all.

The next day we returned inland, once more

going up the Conway valley, but took the road on the other side of the river to the one we came down by, journeying up to the mountains instead of driving away from them. The views being thus reversed, the change of scene was very pronounced, we could hardly imagine we were in the same vale, so great was the difference. About six miles or so from Conway the country to the immediate right of us became very hilly and precipitous, and, although precipitous, it was richly clothed with larch and spruce and mountain ash and various other kinds of timber and shrubs. In fact, wherever a tree could obtain a footing or enough soil to exist upon there was one. What a contrast to the steep, stony, boulder-strewn slopes of the mighty Penmaenmawr headland, where the only vegetation visible was the short coarse mountain grass, sweet possibly to the tooth of the sheep where that animal could get at it, but looking brown and bare to the eye. Here we crossed over an old stone bridge spanning a noisy mountain-torrent fighting its impetuous way along its stony bed. Close to this spot we noticed a picturesque stone-built residence, erected by the side of the stream, and we observed, moreover, a gentleman (the owner) successfully fishing from his balcony overhanging the water. Imagine this, enthusiasts of the gentle art! fancy being able to land the speckled trout without having to leave your own doorstep! This is surely the luxury of sport. High above us, half-hidden by overhanging trees, we could trace the course of the torrent from the top of the cliffs. We could see it, and hear it, too, dashing and foaming,

making cascade after cascade on its headlong way down to the valley. Why in such a rage and hurry, impetuous mountain stream? Are you tired of the noisy strife and become impatient for the rest and peace of the tranquil lowland waters? We pulled up our horses here and descended to inspect the falls. The gentleman aforesaid had been watching us, and guessing our intent, most kindly offered to escort and show us the best way up to the same. He stated they were well worth seeing, and though but little known, except locally, he considered them as fine as any in Wales, if not finer. There fortunately is no railway near this place, so tourists do not trouble this spot, besides, the guide-books barely mention it, if they notice it at all, and what tourist worthy of the name would worry and bother to see any place his trusty handbook did not mention? But our kind and newly-made friend did more than offer his services as a guide: he most thoughtfully insisted upon our putting up our horses in his stables; and as he said the stiff climb would make us hungry, he also insisted upon our taking a pot-luck luncheon with him. Surely we were in good fortune that day, our lines had fallen in pleasant places. Need I say we gladly availed ourselves of this most unexpected and hospitable offer. Such chance and pleasing acquaintanceships are amongst the many pleasures of our mode of travelling, and I am pleased to say from time to time we have made several such acquaintanceships, some of which afterwards (as in the present case) have ripened into true friendships. We found a carriage acted as a certain passport of

respectability wherever we went : the sight of it often overcame small difficulties in the way of obtaining a ready permission to see places, and over houses, grounds, &c., not always easy of access or indiscriminately shown to the general public.

We found the walk up to the highest falls to be a long and severe scramble. The whole way was simply a series of magnificent cascades, anything quite like it we had never seen before, every few yards opened out to us fresh and unexpected features in the scene. We had to go through a little wicket, and past a rural cottage, situated high on the mountain's side, into the garden of the same, in order to obtain the best view of the topmost falls. We should never have found our way had it not been for the kindness of our self-elected guide. And when we got to our point of vantage what a glorious sight was before us ! How grandly the waters came down, leaping madly over the mighty cliffs. What a thunder and roar they made, how they tumbled and foamed, ever hurrying downwards on their wild career with clouds of spray as everlastingly ascending. The tumult and noise of the falling torrent is never hushed, only in summer it is somewhat less loud than in winter. The scene would have been almost terrific if it had not been for the luxuriant foliage, which gave a gentler look to what without it would simply have been a desolate and most savage mountain gorge.

Trees grow here in an astonishing manner wherever they can find root ; the rocks are all moss and ivy covered, and out of almost every chink and

crevice in them peep forth some hardy ferns or grasses. As we were leaving we gave a little boy, who politely opened a gate for us, a few pence; he seemed astonished at and wonderfully grateful for the little 'tip.' How different from our experience at other tourist-haunted spots, so much praised by hotel-keepers and lauded by the guide-books! Pleased he was we could well see, for his honest boyish face could not hide its look of delight; evidently unexpected too was our little gift, for after he had received it he would at once insist upon going and plucking some plums for us from a tree in the little cottage garden as a return for our money, which plums we accepted with thanks and pretended to eat one or two, albeit they were rather sour. What a pity it is such simple good-nature and naturalness should be so often spoilt. We were delighted with our visit to the falls, and duly returned home with our good host and thoroughly enjoyed the excellent repast his kind-hearted wife had prepared for us: we spent a most pleasant and agreeable afternoon here wandering with our entertainers over their farm, inspecting their cattle and the crops and the dairy, and generally enjoying ourselves. They told us that often in the winter, after severe storms, the noise of the boulders and stones crashing against each other, and of the roaring of the waters, was at times simply terrific, making sleep impossible. And let me here express my grateful thanks to our kind friends for all the kindness shown to us as passing strangers, strangers though now no longer. It is a general saying,

seldom or ever denied—in fact, like many other oft-repeated statements, taken for granted, I suppose—that we are a reserved people, shy of strangers; foreigners call us sullen even—envious foreigners! We have, however, never found such to be the case, and consider the statement a libel upon Englishmen. Without running other nations down—there is no need to do that—I must say, from considerable personal experience in all parts of the world, that on the whole in my humble opinion a more generous, hospitable, kind-hearted, and, I must be candid and add, a prouder people exist nowhere than in this island-home of ours. And as for our English pride it is of the right sort; who would not forgive that fault—a fault very nearly becoming a virtue, if it is not actually one? and have we not something to be proud of? Has not Old England bred some of the most famous and gallant men of this or past times? Is there any one square mile of our beautiful island without an interest or a history? Is there not a romance intertwined with every hillside and valley? Are not all her ancient ruins full of precious memories? Is it not the country of Shakespeare, of the Black Prince, of mighty Blake and dauntless Nelson, and countless other heroes of land and sea? Heroes she has, too, of peace as well as war. The soil that gave birth to a Wellington gave birth also to a Watt and a Stephenson. Hers is a glorious scroll of fame. And how peacefully within her thrice-sacred soil sleep her brave and loyal sons!

But enough of this romancing. We left our kind friends in the evening and proceeded rejoicing on

our way to Trefriw, where they told us we should find a most comfortable and old-fashioned hotel, not tourist-haunted, but artist-haunted, what good news! And yet, why were we so bitter against the poor tourists—what were we ourselves but tourists? The road onwards became more and more beautiful, the hills grew even higher and were fir-clad to their very summits, the dark green trees standing boldly out against the light amber sky. A mile or two on our way we came to Dolgarrog, a collection of picturesque old mills with their water-wheels busily at work, with a background of torrent, rock, and foliage. The mills were weaving flannels and tweeds, and round about healthy-looking children were playing, and from the old windows and doors of the buildings glorious peeps of the mountains and the country were to be had. These were a few of the old mills of our forefathers, built before steam as a manufacturing power was known, and working on even to this day. Then these torrents and falls were made of use; now the power generally runs to waste. We could not but help contrasting the difference in the life here and in the crowded, wretched manufacturing towns. Here the workpeople (the few that there are) have pure fresh air and pleasant scenes to look upon, their children are healthy, not to say robust, and enjoy their lives to the full. Shortly after leaving this spot we came to a many-gabled building by the roadside, with rustic seats around; we discovered this to be a spa. We descended and tasted the waters which had a strong flavour of iron; we found a number of people here doing the same, mostly of

the labouring classes, strangely to say; the charge to us was a penny a glass, doubtless to inhabitants of the place it was even less. We were told the waters were a powerful tonic; we quite believed the statement but would prefer to want the tonic. A turn in the road now brought us in sight of our hotel, a long, low, snug, two-storey building, backed by a forest of firs, with the river Conway peacefully flowing in front. We drove up to the door, delighted with the look of the place, our only anxiety being as to whether our steeds could be accommodated. A bright cheery dame came to greet us; she appeared doubtful about the horses, but offered to show us what stabling she had, which she said she hoped we might make do. The stables were somewhat rough certainly, but after a consultation with our man we determined to stay here and make the best of them. They had not been used for some time, and looked dirty and untidy, but it was astonishing after cleaning them out and getting a plentiful supply of fresh straw laid down how different they appeared.

Our hotel proved to be a quiet, sunshiny, out-of-the-world, peaceful sort of a place, and we consequently thoroughly enjoyed our stay there; in fact we came for a day and remained for over a week. What greater praise could we give our inn? We found the company to be both sociable and agreeable, composed mostly if not entirely of artists and anglers who knew the hostelrie of old, and were evidently old stagers here; occasionally, in like manner to ourselves, now and again a stray tourist would make his appearance, but such was a rare

occurrence. The day after our arrival being Sunday, we, like good people that we were, went to morning service at the little church in the village. This church was built by Llewelyn the Great, Prince of Wales, who had a summer palace in Trefriw, and is, therefore, of considerable interest; it is stated he built it to save his Princess the fatigue and annoyance of the long and heavy climb to the chapel of Llanrhychwyn (what a dreadful name for a Saxon tongue to pronounce!) then the only place of worship for this village or hamlet. This latter most ancient structure, which we scrambled up the mountains to see, is dedicated to St. Rhychwyn, a duly canonised saint of the British calendar. The building is a low structure of pre Norman times, the walls are of immense thickness, and the oak beams, &c., are heavy and rough. The porch and entrance-door are solid and quaint in design; altogether the church is a curiosity, and a valuable and most interesting archæological relic.

In the afternoon two of the artists in the hotel stated they were going to take a walk to a beautiful lake situated high up amongst the mountains, and about four miles off, which they said was well worth seeing, and kindly asked us if we would accompany them, and as an additional inducement for us to go, said there was a little cottage by the water's side, in the garden of which we could obtain a rustic tea, having before us a grand view of the lake and the mountains the while. What could be more delightful? We at once joyfully accepted their kind offer; we had a glorious walk up and along a most

romantic glen, rising gradually all the way. And I can honestly say we never enjoyed a four miles walk more; the scenery of the narrow wooded ravine through which we journeyed was unexpectedly beautiful, and when at last we arrived at Llyn Cravnant we were simply delighted with the spot. The llyn proved to be a fine sheet of water of about a mile long, with bold mountains grandly placed at the head of it. We saw the little cottage at the far end, and had a very jolly and most enjoyable *al fresco* tea there; the view from the garden was most impressive, there was a quiet dignified splendour about the hills here quite indescribable. There was, too, an almost perfect silence which was most restful, not a sound was to be heard but the musical cadence of distant falling waters. We could see the streaks of white foam coming down the mountain gullies on the other side of the lake; there were no woods or trees to obstruct our view, and though there was a lonesome look about the scene, there was nothing melancholy or dreary about it. Long, long we rested in this favoured and secluded spot, till the lengthening shadows told us it was time to return, and we reluctantly retraced our way homewards. Never shall we forget the beauties of our afternoon stroll, or the lowly little cottage with its tiny garden, by the peaceful shore of the lovely llyn.

During our stay at Trefriw we used to join one or other of the artists on their sketching 'outs,' and pleasant it was, with such good company, to sit and paint out-of-doors the livelong day. Sometimes we took our places in the rocky bed of a mountain stream,

placing our easels in the running waters, a boulder forming our camp-stool—a rather slippery one, however—at other times we managed to comfortably ensconce ourselves in a secluded glen, and again we would paint some old mill, sheltering ourselves under the arch of a stone bridge; or we would place our easels on the mountain's side and portray a long stretch of open country. Our sketching 'outs' were picnics as well; we always took our luncheons with us, and a drop or two of whiskey did not go so badly with the water of the hillside streams. Even now I look longingly back to those thrice pleasant hours; how we did work and pile on the colours, and how quickly the time sped away, and what good spirits we were always in. My dear wife would bring a novel with her and, sitting on a shawl, would find somewhere a comfortable resting-place, and now and again she would come and give a word or two of encouragement—or the reverse, for she would say what she thought of the work before her. What enjoyable evenings we spent, too, in the snug tiny smoking-room of the hotel, after our day's work was over, comparing our sketches, criticising each other's work in a friendly, if sometimes in a severe manner; my perspective once caused a considerable amount of argument, and in the heat of the discussion a poor sketch of mine fared somewhat badly. What tales and jokes, too, were told over a friendly glass and a soothing pipe! Artists are great smokers and greater talkers, but as a rule their conversation is always interesting and entertaining; and as a body (military men excepted)

I know of no jollier or more agreeable companions. The anecdotes of the difficulties of some artists, relating how they got rid of the many curious and annoying people who would stand by and overlook them at their work, and make disturbing remarks upon the same, were very amusing. I must find room for one or two. A certain well known painter was working at his picture by the riverside near Trefriw. Came to him a party who commenced hostilities by remarking the scenery was very fine there. 'Yes,' he replied, 'but you will find it much finer a mile farther along.' The enemy took the hint. Another, under similar circumstances, turned his picture coolly upside down. And still another (a well-known R. A.) when addressed, blurted out the two well-known Welsh words 'dim Seisoneg'—*anglicè*, no English. 'Poor man,' he heard his tormentors remark,—'poor man, he doesn't know a word of English, and so respectable-looking too'! But the fund of anecdotes we heard here were almost endless; I might fill half my book with them and not exhaust a tithe of the store I gathered. We left Trefriw and our cosy comfortable hotel there with considerable regret; our road led us past Gwydir Castle, the ancient family seat of the Wynns, whose name and doings in days gone by we have run across more than once in our sojourn in these parts. It is a grand, gloomy old pile, originally erected in 1555, but much added to, altered, and rebuilt by successive generations; the house is shown to visitors and it is well worth seeing. The estate belongs now to Lady Willoughby d'Eresby.

The castle has the reputation of being haunted, and some of the old rooms have certainly an eerie and uncanny look, the walls of the building are so thick and the windows so small and narrow, that even in bright mid-day many of the ancient chambers have a dismal look. In fact this appears just the place to find a ghost, if such an article can anywhere be discovered in this busy, matter-of-fact nineteenth century. What with modern improvements and so many old mansions being altered and rebuilt, we should imagine a house with a real ghost, or having the reputation of being haunted by a good old family spectre—none of your modern innovations—ought to be at a premium in the market.

From here we drove on to the romantic village of Bettws-y-Coed once more, our road following the course of the Conway the whole distance; being overshadowed by steep mountain cliffs to the right, which completely shut out the sun from us, but which left the opposite side of the valley in bright glare, it was pleasant to look upon the cheerful warmth, and be in the cool shade the while. Overhead and round about were thick woods of spruce and larch, amongst which were many dark gloomy pines, all waving in the summer wind, and along the roadside were large moss-covered rocks half-hidden by the waving bracken, and many bramble thickets and various other wild plants and flowers, amongst which we noticed a quantity of bilberry wires, and little clusters of the bluest forget-me-nots. As we approached Bettws over the quaint and ancient Pont-y-Pair we had a slight shower: 'The hooded

clouds like friars were telling their beads in drops of rain,' but before we had got through the village, the sky had cleared again, and the sun was once more shining brightly forth. Our road from here led us along the famous Lledr valley, a grand ravine between mighty mountains and hills, along which a river runs, making torrents and cascades in endless profusion; in places for a time it is even lost sight of altogether amongst the deep dark fissures of the rocks, and again it shows itself, a mass of angry, foaming, leaping and splashing waters, dashing madly and furiously against the enormous boulders that compose its bed, which in its haste it often overleaps, in masses of bubbling, seething water. On either side of us were high jagged cliffs, wooded in places at their feet, with distant peeps of barren uplands; the wonderful play of light and shade on the sides of the precipices was a sight to behold, the projecting crags forming the most fantastic shadows. The colouring everywhere was simply marvellous and most astonishing; nowhere had we seen the like before. The sun melting away the mists and clouds from off the hill-sides revealed masses of bright yellows of withered ferns and mosses, and a glory of purple heather and lustrous gorse was over all, toned down and contrasted by the sombre green and brown of the mountain turf and grasses. How nature can paint when she chooses! Everything was bright and gay but not gaudy, brilliant but not crude, effective but not strained, lovely and joyous, but still impressive and grand. About three miles up the valley we came upon a very primitive bridge,

the three piers of which were built of rough unhewn stone; these supported a rude wooden structure erected on the same to convey the road over. Here the river rushed through the narrow gorge in a truly terrific manner, chafing and foaming in the dark recesses of the rocks below. The whole scene was most impressive and would make a capital subject for a picture. We pulled up the horses here in order to inspect the spot more leisurely; we had intended to have attempted a sketch, but our heart failed us on a closer view; instead of a brief hour we found it would require days to suggest even the grandeur and restless movement of the scene. There are some bits of nature readily sketchable, others that require hours of careful drawing and study to fairly represent; this was most decidedly one of the latter, the various forms of the water-worn rocks, and the intricate and puzzling masses of the torrent, would require much patient and laborious draughtsmanship, to say nothing of the overhanging trees and intertwined branches. So we had reluctantly to replace our sketch-book in the boot of the carriage where we always kept it in readiness for use; but, truth to tell, though we made several on our way, most of our sketches were done, when there was anything sketchable, at our midday halt or at our destination for the day, or early in the morning before proceeding on our journey; then we had comparatively plenty of time and were not hurried with our work. From this old bridge and its fine surroundings to Dolwyddelan, a primitive village beautifully situated at the head of the valley,

the scenery though grand, became less impressive, the hills being farther apart, the crags not being so steep, nor the rocks so pronouncedly shaped, and the general outlines being more rounded and not so severe; the country, however, became very bleak, and trees became scarce.

At the village we baited our horses at a little road-side inn, where we obtained some slight refreshment for ourselves, after which, while our steeds were resting, we climbed up to inspect the remains of an old ruined castle close by.

It was in this ancient fortress that Llewellyn the Great was born, and it is interesting on that account. A stern old keep of massive masonry is nearly all that remains of the once grand pile. This has stood bravely against the ravages of time and the still more destructive hand of man. As we saw it, the sun lighting up its weather-stained walls, the grim old ruin seemed almost bright and gay. It stood boldly out against the dark brown and purple moorland and blue distant hills beyond: built as it is on the edge of a precipitous rock, it must have been a place of great strength in its day. All round about the country is bare and bleak; but there is a tradition that, in Llewellyn's time, the whole valley, from here to the sea, was one vast forest, so thick indeed, that a squirrel if he so chose, could travel all the way from tree to tree and never need to touch the ground. On returning to our inn we found the horses duly harnessed as we had ordered, and so at once proceeded on our way, for we had a long and hilly drive before us. Right ahead of us

was a wilderness of mountain peaks apparently forming an impassable barrier to our further progress, but our road solved the difficulty by commencing to mount on the face of them. It was heavy collar-work, and the way was rough and stony, so we dismounted and walked, to ease our steeds. Up and up went our road, and mile after mile found us still ascending; it was a bleak, deserted-looking, storm-beaten moorland waste we were traversing. From time to time we stopped to rest ourselves and the horses, and to admire the grand views we had all around: could any prospect be more glorious? A sea of mountain peaks showing one beyond the other with bare brown moorlands between, the summits of the former all glowing in the setting sun. Here and there we noticed rudely constructed shelter places, built, we presumed, for the shepherds in the winter time; these were roughly put together with loose boulders and stones bound to each other with turf; this must indeed be a dreadful spot upon a raw winter's night with a keen east wind blowing. It would not be a difficult feat to lose one's way among these trackless wilds on foot, especially when the snow had deeply covered the ground. Now and then a shepherd does get lost, sometimes he finds his way again, and sometimes he does not.

Whilst we were leisurely walking along we suddenly came upon a little unexpected glen, with a mountain stream running along its rocky bed at the bottom; and still more unexpectedly, hidden in this remote retreat, we discovered four artists busily at

work; so engaged were they with their brushes that they noticed neither ourselves nor the phaeton, though we were only a few yards away from them. We thought we recognised one amongst the number, so we ventured to approach them; we found, as we expected, our friend amongst the quartet. I hardly know who was the most astonished, our artist acquaintance or ourselves at this strange meeting in this wild, desolate region. It appeared they had that morning, very early, so as to have the day before them, tramped up from the little inn at Dolwyddelan where we had baited our horses and where they had obtained quarters for a time in order to study nature carefully in her most rugged and untamed aspect. We inspected the pictures with interest; they faithfully represented the savage moorland glen, with the huge boulders around, and the clear brown mountain burn finding its way as best it could amongst so many obstacles. The sketches conveyed to one something of the feeling of wildness and unlimited freedom of the scene. Such paintings are very delightful and refreshing to the weary eye to look upon, when coming home in town, tired and weary with the noise and bustle of city life.

Pictures, I always consider, are like so many windows to a room, each one affording a charming prospect, only in pictures we can have a variety of scenes, and those of a kind we most enjoy and sympathise with. Fancy, if such an impossible thing can be imagined—a room with peeps of mountain, lakes and tarns, of old ruined castles, of peace-

ful harvest fields and rural lanes, of moonlit abbeys, of the seacoast, with waves breaking upon a solitary shore, &c., &c. And yet pictures afford us all this and more ; besides if ever we get weary of a scene, a picture can be easily replaced.

Another mile or so, and, to our relief, our road ceased climbing, and it commenced descending even more severely than it had ascended. We had to put our brake hard on and walk down, so trying was the steepness of the hill to the horses, and even then from time to time the carriage ran upon them. Suddenly we came upon some immense slate quarries on either side of the way ; we had left a region of silence and desolation for a world of tumult and everlasting din. Ahead of us, behind us, above us, and on either side of us were men busily quarrying ; blasts were going off incessantly, refuse slates were being dumped and shot over mounds of stony rubbish, with a clatter and a rattling that made it all we could do to keep our horses in hand. These we found, by our map, were the famous Blaenau-Festiniog quarries, and it is from them that the renowned and original two-foot railway runs, conveying the slates for shipment down to the sea at Portmadoc. We were glad to drive out of all the noise and bustle and ugliness. How man can spoil scenery when he chooses !

Some five or six miles farther brought us to the elevated and rural village of Festiniog. It was late and dark when we arrived there, but a cheery gleam of warm and ruddy light thrown from out the inn-door, and showing right across the road, spoke as it

were a welcome, and the good landlady soon made us at home within. Soundly did we sleep that night beneath the sign of the 'Pengwern Arms,' and we awoke next day to a glorious morning, which tempted us out for a short stroll before breakfast to inspect the surroundings of the place, as, owing to the darkness of the preceding night when we arrived, we had seen nothing. The worthy landlord, one of the good old-fashioned sort, who looked, with his wife, after the wants and wishes of his guests, met us at the porch and offered to show us the churchyard, from which, he stated, there was a magnificent view of the richly wooded and lovely valley of Festiniog, ending with a series of majestic mountain-peaks. The prospect truly was a glorious one.

The hotel possesses a guide to the Cynfael Falls, about half a mile distant, in the shape of a fine collie dog. The landlord told us he had been so used to going with parties of visitors from the inn to the spot, that now, if anyone mentions the name of the falls to him, he at once gets up, wags his tail to show he understands what is required of him, and starts off. A useful animal, that! We wondered what the old guide, whose services are now dispensed with, thought of him. A dog guide is certainly a curiosity, and forms quite an attraction to the hotel, and besides he requires no 'tips.'

The Cynfael Falls are well worth seeing: they have, indeed, been described as terrific. Their solitary situation, and the dark, forbidding-looking precipices by which they are surrounded, certainly give one an impressive idea of the place; but when

we were there, perhaps owing to the continued fine weather, the amount of falling water was by no means sufficient to lead one to describe the cascade, in itself, as having anything of an awful nature. But possibly after heavy rains the grand nature of the falls may be more apparent. The narrow chasm of dark rocks through which the water plunges, and their gloomy surroundings, have, however, a certain hold upon the imagination. From the bed of the stream a strange isolated columnar rock abruptly rises, and is known by the designation of 'Hugh Lloyd's Pulpit,' so called from a strange character of that name who died in 1620. This man has been dubbed by some a maniac; others have called him respectively a bard, a magician, and a warrior, though as to what his exploits in the latter capacity were history is silent. He used this rock, which is flat on the top, as a pulpit, and from this he used to preach and rave to any body or bodies he could get to listen to him.

About midday we once more resumed our journey, Bala being our destination. Soon after leaving Festiniog the road began to mount, and gradually the scenery grew bleak and wild again. About three miles on our way we passed close to Llyn-y-Morwynion, or the Maiden's Lake, about which spot, as of most others in Wales, there is a tradition. Near this tarn, too, is a series of forty or more oblong mounds, somewhat difficult now to distinguish, but formerly they were marked by a number of upright stones, which some vandal hand has of late removed or destroyed. These mounds are known by the name of the 'Graves of the Men of Ardudwy,' and

tradition says, once upon a time (what a convenient expression when matters are uncertain and precise dates inconvenient) that the warlike clan of Ardudwy made a raid into the Valley of the Clwyd, and brought away with them a number of women from there. After a time the Clwydites returned the compliment, and surprised the men of Ardudwy on this spot and slew them all. However, the women had so lost their hearts to their captors that, rather than return home, they all rushed into the lake close by and were drowned; all of which history, having been handed down faithfully from father to son for generations past, must be true. Near here, too, are the ruins of an old castle (Bryn Castell), and it is, in my opinion at any rate, more than probable that the graves owe their existence to some battle or siege in connection with the same.

To the right of us now a deep, wide, and dark ravine came in sight, down the precipitous sides of which we could hear the roar of some mighty torrent. We heard it first, but the fall became visible almost directly afterwards, and a fine sight it was. We descended from the carriage and climbed down the hillside in order to obtain a better view of the spot. A wild, savage scene was before us, the falling water almost appearing snow-white against the black, wall-like rocks. The noise of the falls contrasted strangely with the silence all around: it was the voice of the waters shouting in their wrath to the silent, listening mountains, which answered back by a faint echo, a very ghost of the reality. We did not stay long here, for heavy clouds were gathering round about,

and sundry large drops of rain warned us to prepare for a storm. Our elevated road still rose till it reached the summit of the hills, along which it travelled for a time, but before we arrived at the top our ambitious path took us right amongst the clouds and mists, we could not see half-a-dozen yards in front of us, and besides being damp it was bitterly cold. Can anything wet you through so quickly, I wonder, as a regular Scotch mist? I think not. Against a straightforward, honest downpour you can protect yourself, but a Scotch mist is a very different matter—it penetrates everywhere. But we had not to endure our miseries long: we began presently to descend, and as we descended we left the aqueous vapour behind and above us, but we had had enough of it to wet and damp everything.

The barren and desolate country about here possesses an especial interest in being the scene of the long and brave resistance of Caractacus to the Roman power. In fact, he was only at last captured through treachery, and when brought before Claudius, in answer to the query as to how and why he had dared to defy him so long, made reply to the effect that had he not fought so well for years there would have been no honour or glory in conquering him. Through this dreary region runs, or used to run, the old Roman road (Sarn Helen) which we came across once before on our journey at Trawsvynydd: it was protected by fortified posts at several separate stages. Traces of it can even now be plainly seen, and at one spot we saw an old bridge which carried the road over a stream. The arch was apparently as perfect as the

day it was built, so well had it been constructed. It has probably existed for over fifteen centuries, and has been left during ages past to the fate of storms and time, and yet is nearly as sound as in the days when the Roman chariots and soldiers passed over it. They built for all time who built thus.

In due course we reached Bala, a neat, clean, quiet little town, and where we found most comfortable quarters at the White Lion. This old-fashioned, roomy, rambling inn, with its general quaint old-world look, pleased us much. Our bedroom here was low, with a beam across the ceiling, but it was large, and had ancient lattice windows, with leaded diamond panes, and furniture to match. It had much the same look doubtless that it had two hundred years ago. The only thing of interest in the town we noticed was an old ivy-covered church, which had been converted into a carpenter's shop. How such an edifice came to such a base usage we could not discover. It rather grated upon one's feelings to see the ancient ivy-clad tower watching over a busy workshop, in which in times past the brave men and fair women of old used to worship.

A short distance to the south of the town lies the famous Bala Lake. It is the largest in Wales and is very deep, and noted for its trout, perch, and pike, with which fish its waters abound, and also for a species of a peculiar kind called *gwyniad*, the scales of which are of an extreme whiteness. It is a pleasing sheet of water, about four miles long by three-quarters of a mile wide, surrounded on all sides by heather-clad hills, on which the grouse abound.

Bala is a capital centre for sportsmen, either of the rod or gun, and the hotel-accommodation we found excellent, with most reasonable charges, two items that do not always co-exist. Anyhow, the traveller in this part of the world, be he sportsman, artist, or tourist, need not fear that most annoying of all experiences, inferior inns and heavy bills.

CHAPTER XIII.

Bala and Bala Weather—Over the Berwyns—A Fine Prospect—Camping Out—Llangynog—A Tiny Inn—A Small Leg of Mutton—Pennant Church—No English Spoken—A Giant's Ribs—Relics—The Legend of St. Monacella and the Hares—The Highest Fall in Wales—A Puzzling Picture—A Celtic Prison—Ancient Builders—A Friendly Landlord—A Foggy Drive—Strange Effects of Mist—The Horn in Requisition—Llanfyllin—Old Hostelries—A Reasonable Bill—A Wealthy Mine—Cann Office Inn—Railways and Expenditure.

We had fine weather during our sojourn at Bala, but judging from the visitors' book at our hotel, which we amused ourselves by looking over in the evening, we felt we might consider ourselves fortunate. One and all the writers therein complained of the weather; perhaps it was the wet that compelled the unfortunate souls to stay indoors, and being indoors, with nothing to do, they vented their wrath upon the climate in the aforesaid book; however that may be, one extract from it, a fair specimen of many, may prove interesting:—

The weather depends on the moon as a rule,
And I've found that the saying is true;
For at Bala it rains when the moon's at the full,
And it rains when the moon's at the new.

When the moon's at the quarter then down comes the rain,
At the half it's no better, I ween;
When the moon's at three-quarters it's at it again,
And it rains besides mostly between!

Probably in fine weather the visitors' book is but little troubled, tourists having something better to occupy their time than scrawling in it then, and so that may possibly be the reason why we found so much fault-finding with the state of the elements and so little in praise thereof. Still Bala, from its situation, surrounded as it is on all sides by high mountains, which very effectually distil the rain from any passing clouds, must of necessity be, to use a well-known Scotch expression, a moist place. It appears very much in this favoured part of the world, as though

> The West wind always brings wet weather,
> The East wind wet and cold together ;
> The South wind surely brings the rain,
> The North wind blows it back again.

At the same time I would not have a Welshman know for the world that I had any fault to find with the climate of his country, for they are somewhat touchy upon the point. In fact we had no right or cause to complain of it, for during our drive through the Principality we had been favoured with the best of weathers on the whole. Indeed, just a little more rain would have improved some of the falls and done us no harm, but there is no mistake about it at times, the weather in Wales can be very wet and disagreeable when it chooses ; you may wait days and sometimes even weeks without so much as getting a peep at Snowdon. But then, as one man said to me in reply to some unfortunate remark about the day (it was pouring with rain), he liked the wet ! So everyone has a right to their own

opinions. Bala having such an evil reputation, and our road for the next day being, we learnt, a very wild and exposed one right over the Berwyn mountains, we anxiously examined our aneroid overnight, an instrument we always carry with us on our driving tours, and which we have found to be a most useful and necessary addition to our travelling equipment; we were pleased to find it rising.

The next morning dawned with a hazy appearance, giving promise of a fine day, so not knowing what might be in store for us we made an early start. There was hardly any breeze, and as we drove along by the shore of the peaceful lake, the mountains reflected and doubled upon its quiet surface, gave a feeling of repose and tranquillity. After about four miles of level country our road suddenly began to climb the mountains, and it ascended them with a vengeance; what a poor idea of gradients some of the old road-builders had, so steep indeed was it that in places it appeared almost as though it could hardly be steeper without being perpendicular. We had the luxury of indulging in nearly two miles of this heavy collar-work, resting the horses where possible from time to time by turning them and the carriage right across the way with the brake hard on and stones under the wheels.

However, in this world all things come to an end, good as well as bad, and so at last we reached the summit of the pass, and found ourselves upon a lonely and elevated moorland, but by no means a desolate one: coveys of grouse and other game crossing our path boldly, right in front of us every

now and then. We were traversing a fine rolling country, we could just see, over the swelling flanks of the nearer hills, the grey peaks of the higher Welsh mountains. Nowhere else, so far as we had been in Wales, did the country give us the same idea of wide space and unlimited freedom. The intense quietness of these bleak uplands is most impressive; seldom any sound, save occasionally that of running water or the splashing of some fall, disturbs the stilly silence of these vast solitudes. The colours of these elevated lands are beyond expression beautiful: the rich purple of the heather mixed here and there with the brilliant gorse, the subtle varieties of the green tones of the grasses, the rich mellow grey of the rocks and their yellow coverings of mosses and lichens, the occasional sparkling of a silvery stream enlivening the whole, while the blue distance makes a picture, a combination of colour, effect, and contrasting hues not to be surpassed even in gorgeous Italy. We are too prone to despise and leave unheeded the beauties we have at home; had we to travel far to see them, especially if the journey were a difficult and a long one, how we should admire and rave about the same. They are like the fine sunsets which we often have even in smoky London; whoever thinks of admiring them while there are shop windows and brick houses to look upon?

We had a long and delightful drive over this breezy moorland height. In one place we thought we had made a discovery. An old-looking upright stone not far from the road attracted our attention,

and we noticed some curious-looking characters upon it. Was it a Druidical remain or some ancient Runic monument? Alas, no! the stone looked old enough for either, but a closer inspection of it proved the cutting on it to be the simple letters E L of D, rudely executed. We afterwards found it was simply a boundary mark to show where the Earl of Derby's property ended. So much for our wonderful discovery! Presently our road began to descend; we had now crossed the Berwyn range, and we were thankful for it, for we were hungry from our drive through such bracing air, and tired somewhat as well. The view as we descended was very fine, we looked down from our height right and left upon a series of minor glens with a fall of some kind at the end of each. Ahead of us was a wide mountain-girt valley with peeps of distant hills beyond. The road now descended almost as steeply as it had previously ascended, and there was no wall or protection of any kind along the side of it; had we gone over we should have had a clear fall of several hundred feet, and have been dashed to pieces or pulp on the rocks in the vale far below us. Our man could not help exclaiming upon the scenery here: 'My eye, sir!' was his expressive and forcible remark, 'this beats all we have seen as yet, and we've seen a goodish deal, too, this journey.' The prospect opening out before us was certainly very grand, though whether it merited all our groom's praise of it is quite another matter. Our man was, however, a pretty good judge of the beautiful; he had in his time travelled several

hundreds of miles with us (possibly thousands) in almost all parts of Great Britain, wherever a horse and carriage could go, and over roads, too, where they could hardly be expected to traverse.

As I have said, we were hungry and a little tired. Far down in the valley below us we could see the tiny village of Llangynog; it was as yet some three or four miles off, but already we had begun to discuss the chances of there being an inn of any kind there, and if not what we should do. Fortunately we were prepared for such an emergency, as we always carried, stowed away in the boot, a mixture of bran and oats more than sufficient for a feed for each horse. We had likewise provisions for ourselves, enough to make a very good meal, besides a neat and compact little spirit-lamp and all the necessary paraphernalia for making tea or coffee, if we chose, at any time. So as long as the weather kept fine, we had no great anxiety on that score; we could camp out comfortably at the first likely place, on the hillside or by the road under the shelter of the trees. Such picnics are altogether delightful; the horses, too, are allowed on such occasions the luxury of a few handfuls of freshly plucked grass by way of dessert after their corn. And provided the weather is only fairly fine our camping outs are most enjoyable. In due course we arrived at the village; we found it to be most romantically situated at the head of a fine valley and apparently hemmed in on all sides by precipitous mountains, and here we discovered a small and humble wayside inn; humble it certainly looked, but a glance showed us it was kept clean and neat and was well cared for, besides

were there not flowers in the windows and a little well-kept garden in front, with a rustic seat? The only question was as to whether they would have any accommodation for the horses. We observed the legend on the signboard, 'New Inn' 1751. As there was nobody about visible, and the door was fastened, we knocked at the same, the result being the landlady, a comely, pleasant-looking lady, made her appearance. In answer to our queries she said she would call her husband, and soon that worthy individual came to the front. He stated he would do his best to put the horses up, and thought he could manage it somehow, though he had only accommodation for one. Meanwhile the landlady had shown my wife into a tiny little sitting room; small indeed it was, and with a very low roof, but it was clean and neat; our hostess stated they generally had gentlemen staying with them from time to time in the shooting season, and if we could wait and leave it to her she would provide us with a dinner. So we elected to wait; how is it, I wonder, where we expected least we generally fared the best? While our repast was being prepared we went out to inspect the place and have a chat with the landlord, who proved to be a very superior and entertaining individual. We had a long conversation with him and, moreover, a very interesting one. He told us of so many things of local interest round about, that we decided, if possible, to see some of them, and so consulted with the landlady as to whether she could put us up for the night. Certainly she could, at least she would do her best for us, and a very good best

it was; in fact we found ourselves made so comfortable, and the surroundings of the place so romantic and interesting, that we stayed over two nights beneath the lowly but hospitable roof of the little 'New Inn' (an old one now, however), at Llangynog. Truly our bedroom was a remarkably small one, possibly the smallest we had ever slept in, and the ceiling, too, was very low; fortunately we were neither of us very tall, or I do not know however we should have managed; but then everything was scrupulously clean, and could we not obtain plenty of fresh air by keeping our window wide open all night? So we at once determined to stay on. Our dinner was an excellent one; may we never have a worse! We had a most wonderfully tiny leg of Welsh mountain mutton; it was hardly bigger than a good-sized farmhouse fowl (by that I do not mean the miserable things doing duty for the same in London); it was deliciously flavoured and tender, and we demolished it all. Never before or since have I tasted the like, nor ever before did we accomplish the astonishing fact of demolishing between us at one sitting a whole leg of mutton? It appears the landlord rents the inn here, but has a farm of his own on the moors we had so lately crossed, of some hundreds of acres. He proved to be a most entertaining man, and after dinner, while indulging in a cigar, I had a long and very interesting conversation with him. He told me that the land in question had been in his family for over 500 years; it was of considerable extent, but except for sheep-grazing and grouse-shooting it was of little or no value. He had in his possession the

ancient title-deeds, many of which were very curious. How many people in the world there are, making a great outward show with their liveried servants and carriages all emblazoned with crests and coats-of-arms (of curious heraldry, and, needless to say, unknown at the College of Arms), who cannot show or trace their history so far back. An estate that has been for generations past, during 500 years, in the same family, handed down intact from father to son, is something to boast of. We learnt from our good host, who had by this time risen high in our estimation (he was far too humble a man, and we told him so), that there was a very curious old church about two miles off well worth visiting, containing, amongst other rare relics, the ribs of a giant and some quaint carvings and other things of considerable antiquarian interest. As we concluded we should have just time and daylight to see this, we at once started off. After a pleasant walk of about half an hour along a narrow valley shut in on either side and at the end by high precipitous mountains, we reached the little ancient church of Pennant—the one in question. We had, however, some difficulty after we had reached it, to find anyone to show us over; we might as well have been in a foreign country or better, perhaps, for no one about in this far-off and secluded hamlet could speak any English (and this in the nineteenth century!). We had, therefore, to endeavour to make ourselves understood by signs as best we could. At last, after some delay and trouble, we unearthed an ancient party who had the keys of the sacred edifice, but of course we could gain no information from him,

beyond the little we could gather and guess from his gestures and expressive Celtic words, which were even worse than Greek to us, for there was not even the remote possibility of our understanding a single one. We found the church to be a small quaint structure of original design, it had been well restored and was in good condition. Our guide, clerk, or whoever he might be, showed us the so-called ribs of the giant; they consisted of two huge pieces of bone of some kind, somewhat in the shape of a gigantic rib, but if ever they belonged to a human being and he was of a height in proportion to these ribs, all that we conclude was 'there must have been giants in those days,' for he could not have been less than twenty feet high!

But what interested us most was the quaint and rude but very effective carvings of St. Monacella and the hares, representing these latter animals running to her for protection, of which more hereafter. We also noticed amongst the treasures here, a very fine carved oak chest, which held old registers, antique deeds, &c. &c. It had the letters 'G. T. P. P.,' and date 1671 deeply cut upon it, that was at least as well as we could make out; possibly this had been added at a later period by some officious churchwarden. In the church there are two recumbent stone effigies on altar-tombs, very roughly but powerfully executed, chiselled out of one large mass of granite, and evidently of very ancient date. The old Welsh inscription on one of them translated into English means 'The man without a nose,' a pleasant name to bear, certainly.

The little village of Pennant used to be a city of refuge, and the man whose tomb we saw tradition says was killed within a hundred yards of the place whilst flying there for protection. The other tomb was to Princess, or Saint, Monacella, and there is also another we did not notice, to a certain king. So at least the landlord told us on our return, but what king he knew not. The church is dedicated to St. Monacella, the saint and patroness of hares, who lies buried under the monument aforesaid. The tradition of the saint and the hares is as follows, the landlord still being my authority. Long years ago, so long indeed that the date is altogether unremembered, the Princess Mary Monacella who was the daughter of an Irish king, like a high-spirited young lady, ran away from her home and country because she would not marry the man her father had selected for her. In the remote hamlet of Pennant she found a safe refuge and lived there for seven years undiscovered and in perfect seclusion. It chanced, however, that one fine day a certain Welsh prince, one Brochwel Yscythrog, to wit, (what a name for a prince or anyone else, I can only hope I have spelt it correctly!) in pursuit of a hare came across this sequestered spot; the animal for protection flew to Monacella, who happened to be walking out, and hid itself under her dress. For some reason the dogs feared to approach nearer, and, moreover, showed evident signs of terror. The prince, struck at the incident, and perceiving at the same time the beauty and sanctity of Monacella, and hearing of her story, asked what he could do for her. She replied that nothing would please her so much as his

building a church on the spot where she stood. The result was he founded here an abbey, of which he appointed her the abbess, and endowed it with much lands, and directed that the hamlet should thereafter be a city of refuge for man as well as beast.

In due course the abbess died, but her name died not with her. Throughout the district even to this day hares are called St. Monacella's lambs, and until of late years few people, if any, in the parish could be found who would kill a hare. And now even the labourers believe that, if they see a hare pursued by dogs, should they say 'God and St. Monacella be with you' the hare will certainly escape. A very pretty tradition certainly, and are there not the carvings in the old church to prove it is all true, and who would be so hardhearted as to disbelieve it? Anyway Pennant church interested us much; the original edifice of which some portion still remains was built some thirteen hundred years ago—so at least we were informed—I am of course only stating facts as they were told to us. One thing about the old church that particularly struck us was the smallness of the edifice, and the largeness of the churchyard, one was out of all proportion to the other. There was an old sundial and some yew trees in it—very much did I regret I had not my sketch-book with me. On our return we had a capital view of the pretty little village of Llangynog, named from an old British martyr, St. Cynog, whoever he might be, situated at the foot of a tremendous mountain-precipice which forms part of the Berwyn range; in fact the place appeared quite walled in by rocky heights.

Soundly we slept in our tiny room in the little inn, and in the morning started early for the falls of Pistyll Rhayadr, literally, the spout of the cataract (in Welsh all names have a meaning), and which the landlord had told us of. Though we had never heard of it before we came here, it appears this is the highest fall in Wales. The way to it is over a rough and hilly mountain-track of about four miles in length, with lovely views all the way. We noticed large quantities of the parsley fern growing out of crevices in the rocks where the plant could receive but little moisture; this fern we were told grows with hardly any water, a peculiarity about ferns we were not previously aware of. Pistyll Rhayadr is a grand fall set in a framework of stupendous and precipitous rocks. There are no trees or green about. It is a wild, weird, savage scene. The descent of the cascade is considerably over two hundred feet; it is, therefore, amongst the highest in Great Britain. At one time there was a natural arch here, a most interesting feature, and over which visitors could clamber; this has recently been washed away. Respecting this fall there is a strange story told. At Chirk Castle, near Oswestry, which we had visited on a previous journey, is a picture representing Pistyll Rhayadr, but instead of the river at its foot is shown the sea with a fleet of ships upon it. How this picture came to be executed thus has been an almost insolvable puzzle, for in spite of the unnaturalness of it, it is otherwise well painted and has evidently been the work of a skilful artist. Tradition relates many unlikely stories to account for the mystery.

The most probable history respecting this extraordinary production is that the picture was painted by a foreign artist. The gentleman who gave him the commission on being shown the finished sketch remarked that he considered it very good, but thought if a few sheep were introduced it would improve the picture. 'Verrie vell,' replied the artist, 'if you vish it I will put sheeps in,' with a shrug of his shoulders, and a muttered remark as to what a strange people those English were. He duly took the picture home with him and painted the sea at the bottom of the fall with ships (sheeps) upon it, and sent it home to the astonished owner. The artist left England next day; possibly he did not care to work any more for such a strange people; and so the picture remained, and is to be seen by anyone who happens to be in the neighbourhood of Chirk and is curious upon such subjects.

On returning from our expedition we again sought out our worthy host and had a long chat with him, and for nearly two hours we were entertained by his remarks and accounts of local histories and traditions; he proved to be possessed of quite a mine of ancient lore, a mine that richly repaid the working. Amongst other things, he told us on the top of the hills round about were numerous stone circles, supposed to be of Druidical or Celtic origin, and in one spot were four huge stones set up on end so as to form a sort of gigantic square box; near this was another large stone slab which was supposed in times past to have formed a kind of lid to the same, tradition says (what a lot of things tradition

does say, by the way) that this was used as a prison for captives by the aforesaid ancient Druids or Celts, but as for the possible truth or untruth of this supposition our host would not pronounce an opinion ; and after all it is only guesswork, nothing certain can ever now be known respecting these strange erections. The greatest wonder is how such monster stones were ever moved about in the manner they were in times past, as many by their formation prove they must have been conveyed miles to the spot where they now are. Not only in England but in far-off Egypt and other parts of the world, the ancients appear to have found no especial difficulty in moving and transporting gigantic blocks of stone very considerable distances, and using such blocks where there was no necessity for stones of such size being employed, possessing as they did no peculiar value, structural or otherwise, and where, therefore, smaller ones would have done equally as well. Stones indeed of such vast weight and size were used and transported, as with all our present advantages and means would test a modern engineer's powers to the utmost to move and use in a similar manner. It is a well-known fact that the statue of Rameses at Memnonium, estimated to weigh over a thousand tons, was brought from the quarries of Syene, a distance of nearly one hundred and fifty miles ; and enormous stones still lie there, quarried and ready for moving, such as were used in buildings hundreds of miles away. Stonehenge with us is a remarkable example of such engineering feats of the ancient Britons (who I do not think were quite

such uncivilised beings as is generally supposed) and proves conclusively that the removal from great distances and subsequent elevation of ponderous masses of stone presented to them no very difficult task. In fact, as an eminent engineer once said (Mr. J. Fowler, if I remember correctly), 'We have abundant evidence in the works of the ancients to show that it would be well for us in these days if we knew of some of the tools they used, and how they used them.'

We had had such fine and warm weather lately that we determined to make an early move next morning and drive on to Llanfyllin, some ten miles, to our breakfast, so overnight we ordered the horses to be at the door and ready for starting a little before eight. When the morning broke we almost repented of our resolve, for there happened to be a thick and chilly mist; however, we felt it would never do to show the white feather, so we duly prepared for the journey, fortifying ourselves with a cup of hot coffee, after which we felt like the British soldier, fit to go anywhere and do anything. The drive to Llanfyllin proved to be a very hilly one, the road having many ups and downs and few levels, the ups appearing to us to be much more frequent than the downs. The curious effects produced by driving through a strange country in the thick mist were very striking, sometimes there was a local clearance, and the scenery would prove to be almost exactly opposite to what we expected, mountains being where we thought there were fields, and *vice versâ*; and from the tops of some of the

high-lands we traversed we had spread out before us a wonderful prospect : all beneath us was a mass of level fog resembling a vast sheet of water, with the mountains showing above like giant islands. The sunlight was playing on their summits and on the surface of the mist, throwing all into a glory of golden light. From the bright warm sunshine the descent into the gloomy mist was a contrast more striking than pleasant, so thick indeed was it that in places we could hardly see the heads of the horses, and the turnings and twistings of the road were so many and various it was with difficulty we could find our way at all, and more than once we half thought we had lost it altogether. From time to time our horn was brought into requisition, to prevent any possible collision ; for we could not afford to drive slowly, or we should never have got our breakfast till goodness knows when. In one place, standing dimly and ghost-like out of the gloom, we espied the ruins of a modern stone-built Gothic residence, which had evidently been burnt down. At another spot we noticed the huge iron cylinders or pipes that were being laid to convey the waters from an artificial lake high up among the mountains to the busy city of Liverpool. What a pity it is that London, the largest city in the world, and the wealthiest, cannot have a similar supply ! This lake, we were told, was being formed in an upland valley amongst the Welsh hills, at the bottom of which was an ancient church, centuries old, surrounded by an equally ancient graveyard, where for countless generations back the inhabitants of the country

round about had been laid to rest. The church had of necessity to be removed and the bodies re-buried, but somehow the idea was not a nice or pleasant one to us. Strange things are done in these days of advanced civilisation, some of which, I am afraid, would have shocked our simple and plain-thinking forefathers. Should Londoners some day fortunately decide to have their water from Wales, I trust they will select a valley on some of the lone moorlands in which there is no churchyard.

As we drove into Llanfyllin the fog cleared suddenly away and a glorious burst of sunshine welcomed us into the little town. We drove up to the 'Wynnstay Arms' here, a most excellent hotel, evidently one of the hospitable old coaching days. And what a glorious breakfast we had, and how delicious and fragrant did not the coffee taste after our long and appetizing drive! My advice is, if you wish to know how really to enjoy and appreciate a good breakfast—which after all is the best meal of the day—and to know the real flavour and luxury of a cup of coffee, to take a ten miles drive across a bracing country (fogs are not a necessary adjunct) before you indulge in the same. Anyhow, we thought we had never tasted such coffee and such ham and eggs before.

I have a great love and respect for these old-fashioned inns of our forefathers, of which fortunately so many still remain to us; with their ample rooms and generally comfortable and cosy look, they somehow speak an indescribable welcome to you; there is no nonsense anywhere about them; all is

genuine and honest. Architecturally they may not have much to boast of; still, after all, 'beauty is as beauty does,' and they have a general look of fitness and snugness very pleasing to the eye. Internally the stairs are wide, the bedrooms large, airy, and inviting, and there is a general look of plenty and repose. At the time they were built, it was an acknowledged fact that nowhere in the world could there be found hotels that would in any way compare with the great coaching hostelries of England. The cheer, the linen, the food, the wine, the cooking, and the ale were as good as they could be, and the worthy landlord, in his top-boots and portly figure, harmonized well with his surroundings. Some of these things, in the present degenerate times, we may miss, but the old buildings still remain. Their furniture, too, and belongings, when still existing, speak plainly of the good old days; you can sit on the chairs and dine at the tables in comfort, and some of the old sideboards are of the kind that are now sought after and are honoured in modern London houses. Why, their very names, the Red Lion, the White Hart, the King's Head, the Crown, and countless others, have a peculiar charm to me, suggestive of old-fashioned comfort, and giving one the feeling of 'taking one's ease at one's inn'; how unlike in this respect are they, and how differently do they strike the imagination to the cold-sounding modern titles of the Langham, the Grosvenor, the Midland, Grand, &c., &c. Nothing about them was mean, their very signboards often cost 50*l.* or more, the hand-beaten iron scrollwork supporting these,

not a few of which still remain, were perfect works of art in their way. The stabling and courtyards more often than not were on a regal scale, and vestiges of their former glory are yet to be seen. In market towns the extensive stables are still of service on the several days farmers and others drive in to transact business, though lonely enough and deserted looking at other times. In fact, the spacious yards and ample entrances which give such an appearance to these old hostelries, were indispensable in the olden days, when the traffic by road was very great, and unnumbered travellers were coming and going from morning till night.

On market days in these country towns one is able to obtain a dim idea of what an old posting inn in its glory was like. Whilst on the subject of inns, it may not be out of place here to append our bill of the New Inn at Llangynog. I do this as a curiosity, it being, without exception, the most reasonable and cheapest hotel-bill we have ever had anywhere during our travels of many years past over all parts of Great Britain, from Scotland in the north to the Land's End in the south. When I say the most reasonable, I mean of course taking into due consideration the quality of the entertainment, which, though plain and simple, was exceedingly good, as far as it went, and our rooms, though certainly very small, were clean and comfortable. Actual prices are of course, without other particulars, no criterion, as low charges with bad or inferior accommodation may really represent a dear bill. Here then is our account :—

New Inn, Llangynog.

Cadwalladr Jones, proprietor.

	s.	d.
Breakfast for two	3	6
Dinners twice for two	8	0
Teas twice for two	5	0
Bed, two nights	4	0
Ale	0	4
Oats for horses	7	0
Stabling	6	0
Total	£1 13	10

It will be noticed, no charge for attendance is made, or for the two cups of coffee we had the morning before starting. We felt, in fact, the bill was a mere incident of our stay, and not the disagreeable feature it too often is; our money was received with thanks, and we left, feeling still in debt to our worthy host and hostess for all their kindness and friendly attention to us. We were told here that some extensive lead mines we had passed shortly after leaving Llangynog and belonging to Earl Powis, were the largest and richest in Wales. They were discovered in the year 1692, and for forty years paid annually a sum of 40,000*l.* in royalties, but in consequence of an irruption of water were abandoned, it being considered hopeless any longer to work them profitably. After having remained in this neglected state for many years, a powerful company with the most approved machinery leased the works, and by their spirited method of working managed to overcome the water and to convert the mine once more into a paying one, it being stated that they now derive an income of

nearly 30,000*l.* a year from the same, which sum, large as it is, would be considerably increased were there a railway near at hand—the haulage of the ore several miles over a hilly and rough road to a station, diminishing considerably the profits, by increasing materially the working expenses.

We took a tour of inspection round about Llanfyllin. It proved to be a pleasant little town, surrounded by scenery of great beauty. The only thing it appears noted for is an ugly red brick church, which is supposed, by the inhabitants at any rate, to be very fine: to build which an ancient structure of much beauty and architectural merit was pulled down. Truly the hand of the rebuilder and restorer is even more destructive than that of the iconoclast!

From here we had a grand drive through magnificent scenery to 'Cann Office' inn, where we arrived late in the evening, just in time to escape a heavy storm; the last mile or two was a race between us and the rain; every minute we expected to be caught in a heavy downpour; we, however, just managed to arrive at our destination in time to escape a regular wetting. Why this solitary and rural hotel has such a curious and businesslike name we could not discover. It is a fine large building, with ample accommodation for a number of guests, and has extensive and well-kept stabling over the road, and—what we always appreciate as much as anything in country hostelries—a large and capital garden for visitors to walk in. To my mind one of the pleasantest features about these old-fashioned inns is their delightful gardens. After a long day's journey, how restful

and gratifying it is to moon about in them in the peaceful gloaming, smoking a fragrant cigar the while you watch the fading landscape all around, and chat and go over again the pleasures of the day.

We fared well, not to say luxuriously, at the 'Cann Office' inn, and again were agreeably surprised by a most reasonable bill; in fact ever since we had left the railways behind, our expenditure had been wonderfully small. This place is sixteen miles from the railway, Welshpool, which is that distance away, being the nearest station; so we were about as much out of the reach of railways as it is possible to be in these times, when the country is gridironed all over with them.

In the morning we found the hotel quite busy with travellers (consisting of tourists, sportsmen, fishermen, men of business, &c.), coming and going, and baiting here, all of whom, congregated about, gave quite a cheerful and lively look to the place. Excepting that there were no mail-coaches, the inn-yard must have presented much the same aspect of life and bustle (so strangely in contrast with the now usual quiet of such places), as it did in the days before the iron horse was invented and caused so many of the fine old roads to become almost deserted. When we started, the landlady came to the door to wish us a pleasant journey, and thanked us for our custom, and we in return thanked her for making us so comfortable. These little attentions and civilities cost nothing, and yet how pleasing they are; they oil the wheels of life as it were, and make everything go smoothly. How different is all this

from the big, modern, showy, and as a rule, comfortless hotels, where you are a mere number, and no one cares about or takes any interest whatever in you or your doings, at least until your bill is presented, when the waiter, boots, porter, &c. (never to be had before when wanted), always manage to make their appearance with that precious document, and suddenly become disagreeably officious, and all at once take a violent interest in you—till they receive their extra tips. There is no cheery landlord or motherly landlady to welcome you or speed you on your departure, to retail to you any local gossip or traditions, and almost to forestall your wishes and your wants, and whose kindness and attentions make you feel more of a welcome guest than a stranger. Such hotels were our pet aversion; anyone who knows the homelike comfort and ease of the good old-fashioned English inn, must feel how great is the contrast.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Lovely County—Old Timbered Houses—Llanfair—Picturesque Confusion—Curious Old Church—A Coracle—An American's Experiences—A Runaway Team—We Just Escape a Collision—Complicated Roads—Berriew—Rodney's Monument—Gold and Lightning—Montgomery—Adventure with a Bull—Montgomery Castle—The Robber's Grave—A Modern Miracle—The Legend of the Highwayman—A Ghastly Tomb—Bishop's Castle—A Clever Ruse—An Ancient Register—A Superannuated Locomotive—Clun, its Castle and Church—Knighton.

We were now leaving the mountains behind ; hills there were on all sides, but they were of a much lower elevation than those we had lately been accustomed to, and their summits were more rounded; the jagged peaks were no longer visible. Green pastures extended on either side of us, and on the hill-slopes were crops of barley and hardy oats ; the tops alone were uncultivated, and consisted of long miles of moorland covered with bracken and purple heather, the yellow and green of the former contrasting finely with the rich tones of the latter.

The country was very beautiful and appeared to us to be very rich after the bleak and wild scenery of the northern portions of Wales we had just left. We were now in Montgomeryshire, a county noted for its woods ; in former times, before the days of ironclads or steelclads, or whatever is the proper title for a modern man-of-war, the principal supply

of oak timber for the navy came from here. A lovely county is Montgomery, with an old-world look about it; it appears to have successfully resisted the so-called modern improvements, and consequently its beauty has not suffered; it has a mellow, peaceful, restful, human look about it. From time to time we passed several comfortable-looking old timbered houses (which always appear so picturesque in the landscape) with their quaint gables and ample chimneys, and pleasant gardens, all gay with the good old-fashioned flowers. The farmers here appear to cultivate their land well. We noticed several well-stocked farmyards and farmhouses, with fat-looking stacks gathered around—a pleasing sight, but, like the dear old windmills, a sight not so often seen now as formerly, when the steam thrashing-machine causes so much corn to be thrashed in the open field. We noticed, too, round about the farm-yards quantities of snuff-brown pigs, which curious animals amused us immensely, as we had never seen anything like them before. We were told that they were peculiar to the county. They struck us as being more uncommon than beautiful. But then, the farmers about here consider pigs of any other colour as unnatural creatures—so much for custom.

Our road now ran alongside the river Banw to the somewhat primitive village of Llanfair, which latter consisted of a collection of ancient buildings, placed apparently here and there wherever the builder chose, and without the slightest idea of any order, the result being picturesque confusion. But as Llanfair is not a business place, what does it

matter, and who would wish it otherwise? It is a question which is preferable—picturesque confusion or ugly order? I should vote for the picturesque, I am afraid. There is no reason why order and beauty should not go hand in hand, but somehow, unfortunately, they generally manage to disagree. Order is a very good sort of fellow, and most useful, too, but he gets very tiresome and monotonous at times.

The village boasted of a very curious old church quite in keeping with the place. It had a peculiar tower and steeple—the former was of stone, the latter of wood. We did not dismount to inspect it, but both tower and steeple appeared to be octagonal, a very uncommon shape, and effective, too; at any rate, it shows considerable originality in the design. The architect, whoever he may have been—and he has doubtless gone to his rest long ages ago—was no slavish copyist of old models, but struck out an original idea for himself. Would that all architects were the same!

About Llanfair the river scenery is very beautiful; in one spot an old mill, in another a tumbling weir, and here and there picturesque stone bridges with numerous cascades, make as pleasing pictures as it is possible to imagine. We noticed on the river here what we had often heard of but never had the good fortune to see before—viz., a coracle. These extraordinary and curious boats are of oval shape, and about five feet long by four feet broad; the front end is much more pointed than the other, and the seat is in the middle. They are constructed of

wicker-work covered with rough hide, or more frequently with tarpaulin or canvas pitched over. They are easily carried, and are principally, if not entirely, used by fishermen, who convey them to and from the river on their shoulders. There is an old Welsh saying which applies to these, 'Carry me and I will carry you.' Boats of this description were used by the early Britons. Indeed they appear in general use in the far-off ages, for Herodotus describes them in his writings as well as Julius Cæsar and other ancient authors. They certainly appear very unsteady, if not unsafe, boats to travel in, though undeniably handy and possessing the advantages of being inexpensive and easily constructed. There is a story related of an American, who whilst on a tour in this country with some friends, saw a coracle on one of the Welsh rivers, and declared it was quite an easy thing to navigate one of these strange boats; and, in spite of the cautions freely given of the danger of paddling in them without some experience, he would get into one—just to show how easily they could be managed. He started out bravely from the shore, to the admiration of the onlookers, singing the while;

Hail Columbia, happy land!

Just as he had finished this line, he was suddenly capsized, and struggling to land, he shouted,

If I ain't drowning, I'll be d—d.

Remembering the American's adventure, though somewhat curious in the matter, I resisted the temptation to try my fortune in the frail coracle.

No doubt for fishermen skilful in their use, and for those who are good swimmers and do not object to an occasional ducking, they are very capital and handy contrivances, and ensure the capture of many a fish a landsman would infallibly miss; but for my own self, I preferred to watch others using them.

Near here too, we noticed posts with hooks upon them. On inquiry we found these were for the local mail bags, which were collected from time to time, as the mail cart goes by. We wondered how it was the bags did not sometimes get stolen.

A few miles farther along we passed the fine park of Dôlarddyn, and here we were very near coming to grief, although through no fault of our own. On the road some distance ahead of us we noticed a waggon piled up with crockery, with two horses galloping along at a fine pace on the wrong side of the road. Not knowing whether the man in charge was drunk or not, we sounded a loud blast on the horn, but with no effect. As the horses came nearer we discovered they were driverless, and proceeding along at their own sweet will, and at the imminent risk of an upset and a general smash. If such a thing had happened, it would have been a sight to behold. Something had to be done—and done quickly—and it was a question what was the best course to take? Whether to cross the road—if there was time—to the other side, or to attempt to turn them as they approached us? Either proceeding would not be without some risk, as the runaways were steering a very erratic course, though in the main showing a decided preference for the wrong side of the way. We concluded to remain where we were,

and pulled the phaeton as close into the hedge as possible, so as to leave as much spare room as practicable. We again sounded the horn, hoping to stop them; however, they observed us, or at any rate, they suddenly altered their course upon approaching the phaeton, and fortunately gave us a wide berth. But it might easily have been otherwise, and goodness knows what the result would have been—a grand and exciting smash-up all round, possibly of a not very agreeable nature. What became of the load of crockery and the runaways we never heard.

Some half a mile or so from the scene of our adventure we came to a small roadside public-house, where we pulled up to give the horses some gruel. We found here two men who had charge of the waggon—the stock-in-trade of some country shop—inside drinking and chatting, the two worthy individuals imagining all the time that their steeds were peacefully and quietly standing outside. Deluded mortals! I rather think they were just a little astonished when we told them the real state of affairs. They both suddenly bolted out of the place—I am not sure even if they did not forget to pay for their beer; and the last we saw of them was as they took a bend in the road, tearing along as hard as they could, in the vain hope of overtaking their runaway team.

Our route now became somewhat complicated, and a halt had to be called, in order to consult our maps and books, the result being a divergence from the main highway to a series of cross-country roads, which, though saving us several miles in distance,

proved to traverse a very rough and hilly line of country, which recalled to our mind an old proverb : 'The longer way round is the quickest way home.' However, the very nature of the hilly tract of country afforded us glorious peeps of the fine scenery all around. At the top of one hill (we were always climbing up a hill or descending one) we passed through the deserted-looking village of Castell Caer Einion, so called, I suppose, because there is not, and never has been, any castle there; on the same principle that the streets of many of our country towns appear to be named—where you will often find Broad street to be the narrowest, High street to be the lowest, Hill street to be the most level, Paradise street to be the worst and dirtiest in the place, and so on in charming inconsistency.

The next village—Berriew—we passed through, was both in itself and its situation one of the most picturesque hamlets we had ever come across. The ancient timbered and many-gabled houses, on one of which we noticed the date 1616, and initials T. K., the quaint old church, the shallow rippling river, the wooded hills around, altogether gave one a delightful impression of this charming spot. The only thing at all modern-looking about the place is the bridge; the old one, a primitive wooden structure, having fallen in with a waggon and horses upon it; fortunately, though alarmed, neither man nor beast was hurt. From here we had a fine view of the hill of Breidden, a very conspicuous object, upon the summit of which is erected a fine monument to the memory of the gallant Rodney There is a story

that when the pillar was first built it was surmounted by a gilt ball, which glistened with great effect in the sunshine. There was a settled belief among the natives that this was of solid gold. One day a tremendous thunderstorm came on and the lightning struck the column, shattering the ball. Afterwards the hill swarmed with the inhabitants of the villages around, in search for the gold, and great was their surprise and disappointment at finding none!

A few miles of easy trotting road brought us to Montgomery. On arriving here we nearly drove up to a private house, it having so much the look of an hotel save the signboard. Doubtless it had been one of the old coaching inns converted into a residence, and hence our mistake; it was by the merest chance we did not ring the door-bell and ask if we could be accommodated for the night. Further up the town, however, we discovered the Green Dragon, a fine old timbered building, restored and in capital order, with a large, grand, old-fashioned kitchen, of which we caught a glimpse as we passed, and which was certainly the most comfortable apartment in the place. How cheery the bright copper, brass, and pewter utensils looked—reflecting the ruddy firelight, and glowing like molten silver and gold! Well do I remember one other such a kitchen: it was at a country rectory situated in the wilds of North Devon. It was the custom of the house, after the servants had gone in the evening, for the worthy rector and his visitors to gather together here and have their grog and final pipe, a large log being put on the fire for their especial benefit. What pleasant evenings those

bolted, to the poor artist's intense relief and delight. I need hardly say our friend never attempted to finish his picture. Another acquaintance of ours, whilst out sketching, was attacked by some Highland cattle, and he was only too pleased to make his escape over a wall close by, from the other side of which he had the pleasure and satisfaction of seeing his canvas, easel, &c. completely demolished.

However, to return to the castle, we reached this at last in safety, or at least what remains of the once extensive stronghold. This old fortress has had a long and chequered existence; it has been taken and retaken, destroyed and rebuilt, times without number. It was originally erected by Baldwyn, who was appointed by William the Conqueror to be Lieutenant of the Marches of Wales. It subsequently fell into the hands of Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, who changed the name of the castle and town from Baldwyn or Trefaldwyn, i.e. Baldwyn's town, to his own, and which it has born ever since. Lastly of all it was garrisoned for King Charles in the Civil Wars, was surrendered after a short resistance to Cromwell, who ordered it to be destroyed—the general fate of British castles.

We next proceeded to explore the ancient church. We had some trouble in finding the clerk who had the keys, but at last we managed to unearth that individual, whom we discovered to be an old man named Pryce, aged eighty-one years, and still hale and hearty—a fact which speaks volumes for the salubrity of the place, as he had resided here all his life.

On entering the churchyard, he asked us if we would like to see the 'Robber's Grave,' and expressed surprise, when in reply to his enquiries, we confessed our ignorance of the history of the same. The legend of the Robber's Grave, he stated, was one of the chief traditions of Montgomery, and then he proceeded to relate it to us for our especial benefit. It appears, when he was quite a young man, a certain Englishman named John Newton came into this part of the world and was employed as a bailiff on a farm near the town. For some reason he earned the enmity of two men living in the neighbourhood. These two individuals, Robert Parker and Thomas Pearce, accused him of highway robbery, and upon their sole and unsupported evidence he was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged—such offences then being punished by death. Newton at the trial loudly protested his innocence, but his protestations were not heeded. Our informant stated he was present at and witnessed his execution outside the prison-gates, and upon the scaffold the culprit made a speech which much impressed Pryce. He declared solemnly before Almighty God that he was perfectly innocent of the crime for which he was about to suffer, and in proof of his innocence he said: 'I have prayed God that, for one generation at least, the grass may not grow upon my grave, that all men may know I have been wrongfully accused.' Newton's body was duly buried in the churchyard, and sods were placed over his nameless grave, but the grass quickly withered, and soon only the bare earth was visible. The magistrates ordered some fresh green turf from the

castle-yard to be laid upon the grave, but this withered away in a similar manner, and in the course of one night. Then some gardeners were employed to dig up the ground and plant seeds, and, moreover, the place was watched ; but all to no avail, still the spot remained brown and bare, somewhat in the shape of a coffin, and upon which nothing could be made to grow. The clerk told us he had now watched the grave for sixty-five years, and that during all that time not a blade of grass had grown upon it ; but for the last four or five years there were signs that the place was beginning to gradually close up, the bare patch not being quite so wide as formerly. Of the two witnesses, he said one who worked in a quarry was killed almost directly after the execution by a piece of rock falling upon him and crushing him. The other was smitten with a wasting disease and died within a year. Such is a faithful record of the 'Legend of the Robber's Grave' as related to us by Pryce, who is the sole survivor of those who heard Newton's dying speech, and as he said there is the grave to prove it is all true. Inside the church we noticed a fine old monument or altar-tomb, and which was coloured : it was, the clerk told us, erected to the memory of Richard Herbert, father to the renowned baron of the same name. His recumbent figure reposes above, under a magnificent canopy, representing him as in life with all his armour on ; beneath this he is shown in death and in his shroud. It was a curious and somewhat ghastly piece of work, looking doubly so in the uncertain evenlight, and the oppressive gloom of the massive building. In order

to observe it better (after obtaining permission) we lighted a wax taper, and the vivid light and shade caused by the same had quite a startling effect, the appearance of the sculptured form in death being horribly realistic and weird. We perceived also an ancient and very fine carved screen, but the light was fading so fast, and it was so dim already, that we had to leave without inspecting further this fine old building. Doubtless had we been able to have done so, we should have found much more of interest. The screen, we were informed, was removed from the priory of Cherbury at the dissolution of that establishment.

We had a fine morning the next day, and an enjoyable drive through a lovely country of some nine miles to Bishop's Castle, where we were once again on English ground. On the way we had a fine view of the Wrekin, a well-known Shropshire mountain. The country through which we were travelling had been the scene of many a bloody conflict between the English and the Welsh, in the times before, and even after, the two nations were united.

At one place near Montgomery a piece of level land is shown, the locality of a desperate battle and a clever ruse. It appears that the crafty Welshmen, pretending to run, enticed their adversaries into a bog, having got them entangled in which, they fell upon them and easily defeated them, granting no quarter. How different from the present peaceful aspect of the country! Then, all along the borders the cry was, 'Boot, saddle, and spur!'

Continuing on our way we crossed the little river Camlet. It is astonishing what a number of rivers we became acquainted with on our tour, of whose very existence we were before in total ignorance. This stream is noteworthy as being the only river that flows from England into Wales.

Bishop's Castle we found to be a quaint little sleepy, picturesque, old-world town—quite a quantity of adjectives to describe so small a spot, yet it deserves them all. We stopped here a short while to inspect the place, though we had not much time to spare, as our day's stage was to Knighton, going through Clun forest and village on our way, thus crossing that portion of England that projects wedge-shaped into Wales, travelling all day in the former country, but sleeping again at night once more in the Principality. The 'Castle' inn here stands upon the site of the ancient stronghold of the Bishops of Hereford, and gives its name to the town. Why bishops should either possess or require a fortress is, however, more than we could understand; they must certainly have represented the church militant. The church, a grand old structure, is, as our American cousins would say, finely placed. It was much damaged and knocked about during the Civil Wars, though it has since been thoroughly restored. In fact, during that eventful struggle, the inhabitants of the place turned it into a stronghold and held it for the king; it was besieged in due course and burnt over their heads. The register is a very ancient and most interesting one, dating as it does as far back as 1559. We

noticed some old timbered houses here, the top storeys overhanging, with crossed beams, evidently of a very early date. We here passed a branch railway line overgrown with grass, and with an old superannuated locomotive rusting on the same: an uncommon and not a very lively scene. In the days to come, when railways are superseded by some new and wonderful mode of conveyance (if ever they are superseded) such a sight might not be a rare one. Even it might be made the subject for a telling picture by some twentieth century artist, and people might then, looking at it, lament (as some do now of the old coaching days) the times of the picturesque railways. Who knows? The world progresses, or moves on at any rate (all movement is not progress, it should be remembered) at a tremendous pace. The impossible of to-day is the possible of to-morrow; and however improbable it may seem to us that railways should ever be replaced by a superior method of locomotion, still we must bear in mind it would have appeared even more improbable to our forefathers that we should be whirled through space at the rate of sixty miles an hour; that we should be able to send messages across the broad and stormy Atlantic with lightning rapidity, or even to the other end of the world, or as, in case of the telephone, we should be able to speak along a wire. Since the world began, until this century, the greatest speed on land that man could travel was limited to the pace a horse could gallop, and on the water he was at the mercy of the winds

From Bishop's Castle on to Clun we had a

very hilly road, the roughness of the way being compensated by the magnificent views we had all around. On our way we met several droves of sheep—animals for which the district is famous, Clun Forest mutton being highly esteemed. The country round about is still called a forest, though it is a misnomer, as the woods have long years ago disappeared, and large sheep-walks have taken their place.

The little village of Clun is situated in a lonesome valley surrounded by bleak heights. We found there two hotels, both looking very unpromising, externally at any rate. As there appeared but little to choose between them, we selected the one nearest the castle. However, in spite of outside looks, we fared fairly well; the food was good, though the accommodation and appointments were rough. While the horses were taking an extra rest after their long and heavy stage, we started out to inspect the ruins. We found neither guide nor gate to bar our progress; the access was perfectly free. This is as it should be, and evidently proves that few, if any, tourists, find their way to this secluded spot, or else that the inhabitants are not so greedy or unwise as to extort the utmost from their visitors.

It is a great mistake for places, that cater for visitors, to drive so many discontentedly away by fencing in and charging so much a head for every sight, natural or artificial; they should rather reverse such a short-sighted policy. The principal part of the fine Norman castle remaining is the stern old keep, the walls of which are some fourteen feet in thickness, and are faced with hewn stone. It was

built soon after the Norman invasion by the Fitz-Alans, a warlike race, and who were an all powerful family in these parts. In their time this stronghold was a place of great strength and importance, but now

> Ages have pass'd since the vassal horde
> Rose at the call of their feudal lord ;
> Serf and chief, the fetter'd and free,
> Are resting beneath the greenwood tree,
> And the blazon'd shield and the badge of shame,
> Each is alike an empty name.

This castle is said to be the scene of Sir Walter Scott's novel of 'The Betrothed.' Close to the village is a Caer ditch, called the Caer Caradoc ; it was originally an entrenched fortress of the famous Caractacus.

The church, situated on the top of an eminence, is a venerable and interesting old pile. Like its neighbour at Bishop's Castle it suffered a good deal during the Parliamentary Wars. Fleetwood, one of Cromwell's favourite generals, used it for stabling or barracks, or something of the kind, and damaged the edifice considerably thereby. It has, however, been recently restored in a very careful manner after designs by, and under the supervision of, the late G. E. Street, R.A. If those responsible for restorations would only employ competent men, we should not have to lament, as we so frequently have, the irretrievable damage done to our fine old religious and other structures : sacred heirlooms of the past days never to return. There is a quaint lych-gate here, replacing an ancient one of similar design. It is greatly to the credit of Mr. Street that he has

in no way attempted either to alter or to improve upon the ancient work: even where possible the old materials were used, and in all the restorations the former work has been retained both in shape and design. This is proper restoration, and although comparatively recently done, the old stone and woodwork re-used wherever practicable in the re-building give an antiquated effect to the same, so different to the brand-new look of most modern restorations or desecrations, in which all appearance of age has been done away with, and a raw, cold, meaningless nothingness left. The old oak door is studded with nails, and bears the date 1666 carved upon it, though it looks much older. The roof of the church consists of slabs of stone, requiring heavy rafters to support their weight.

Our road from here to Knighton was a dreadfully hilly one, altogether the worst we had had this journey, and we had had some pretty rough ones, too. It was nothing but stiff mounting, and equally steep descending, the whole of the way; the country we crossed consisted of a series of hills, straight over which our road took us, one after the other; at the foot of most of the descents we had a stream to ford. There had been no attempt to form any gradients: right up the face of one hill and down upon the other side of it we had to go, and then up and down again, and so on the whole of the distance. We had to do a good deal of walking, the road was so heavy, and we were not sorry in the evening to arrive at the end of our journey.

We arrived at Knighton upon a market-day,

and consequently we found, as usual under such circumstances, nothing but bustle and confusion in the place, and, I am sorry to add, we noticed a good many drunken, but unfortunately not silent, people about. In fact, they were a great trouble to us, for they showed such a decided preference for the middle of the road, and our horses in particular, that it was a matter of extreme difficulty to steer a clear course. We drove up here to quite a grand and palatial hotel, the 'Norton Arms'; it was a massive and impressive-looking, ancient timbered building, with large leaded windows, great gables, and endless stacks of chimneys, erected at least two centuries ago, and we rejoiced at our good fortune in having come across such a delightful hostelrie. Alas, our rejoicing was of short duration: we found the place was closed for repairs and refurnishing! However, we found exceedingly comfortable quarters at the Swan, another old-fashioned inn of the town.

CHAPTER XV.

Knighton, an Enterprising Place—Offa's Dyke—King Harold's Law—Presteign—An Ancient Timbered Hostelrie—The Warden Hill—The River Endwell—English and Welsh Cottages—Our Impressions of Taffy—A Laughable Catastrophe—Where Mrs. Siddons first appeared—Weobly—Brinsop Court—A Moated Grange—Wordsworth—The White Cross—The Green Dragon—Hereford and its Cathedral—Wyatt, the Restorer—A Knight's Tomb—The Castle Green—Ledbury—An Old Town—A Peculiar Steeple—A Curious Tombstone—A Strange Legal Fact—The Beacon Hill—A Fine Panorama—Malvern.

We found Knighton to be quite a prosperous and busy-looking town, with more appearance of life and commercial spirit in it than any other we had visited in Wales. Our phaeton clock had stopped on our arrival at this place, the spring being broken, and, being of peculiar construction, we quite concluded we should have to do without it till we returned to London. But on taking it to a little watchmaker here he said he could repair it in a few hours; so we left it with him overnight, though not without some misgivings, as we half-expected, in spite of his assurances, he would make a bungle of the job. However, to our surprise and delight, we found it ready for us next morning, duly repaired and going; and it was well done, for it has kept excellent time ever since. There are not so very many towns in England where such a difficult job could have been done—at least, without sending the clock away—nor in the

time. So, from this little incident, we concluded, rightly or wrongly, Knighton was quite an enterprising place. It is certainly a most pleasantly-situated town, being built in the richly wooded valley of the Teme, and on the river of that name, which, by the way, is famous for its trout. Yes, as anglers well know, the Teme is a fishful river; there really are trout in the water, and it is your fault if you do not catch them—at least, so the natives say.

At Bryn Glas, near here, in the year 1402, a sanguinary battle was fought between Owen Glyndwr and Sir Edmund Mortimer, in which the latter was defeated with great slaughter.

Three miles from Knighton, which three miles consisted of stiff and constant collarwork, we reached the summit of a long range of hills, from which point we had magnificent prospects all around. Miles upon miles of lonely moorland were before us, and hills beyond hills in countless succession, till they were lost in the blue haze of the far-off distance, half land and half sky. Running along the tops and shoulders of these hills we could trace the remains of ancient earthworks, all grass-grown now, but still plainly showing where the land had been dug out and entrenchments made. And yet these fortifications were constructed over a thousand years ago! The spot upon the moorland where these earthworks cross the road is marked by a stone, bearing the following inscription:—

OFFA'S DYKE
Made in the year
A—757—D.

This ancient rampart was constructed originally by Offa, king of Mercia, and has ever since borne his name. By some it is supposed that it was made more for a boundary line than for defensive purposes, but this hardly tallies with its appearance. King Harold made a law that if any Welshman passed over this dyke, his right hand should be cut off, so that he might recollect not to trespass again, and as an encouragement and a gentle hint to other roving Welshmen to stay at home. Certainly a severe punishment for the offence, but then, as Harold (provided, of course, he had caught him) might as easily have killed the intruder, possibly he deemed his law not over severe. Evidently he did not wish for Welshmen in his kingdom.

Our mid-day halt was at Presteign. It is a pleasant little town, built by the small river Lugg (another unheard-of stream—to us, at least), and has the enviable notoriety of being the cleanest place in Wales. It was well we should have such an agreeable spot for our last stage in the Principality, for that night we slept in England for the first time for some weeks. Strangely enough, as at Knighton, so here, we found a very fine old timbered hotel; but, unlike the one at Knighton, we gained admission to this one, though, for reasons presently explained, we should not have done this had we been a few weeks later. The house appeared nearly deserted, and we had to ring the bell twice before anyone came to us, but after waiting awhile the door was answered. We found the interior quite equal to the exterior. The motherly old landlady, noticing our great and

undisguised interest in the place, kindly took us all over the grand old pile, and explained the uses of everything to us, and showed us the various rooms. Our ramble over and inspection of this quaint, old-fashioned inn was to us a great treat. We noticed the date, 1616, carved over the doorway—evidently the year in which it had been built. The rooms were wainscoted round with oak ; the doors were of the same wood, with hinges and handles of the old style—save a few, where a modern restorer had been at work, spoiling everything he touched (it is almost a wonder he did not paint over the fine dark wainscot) ; the fireplaces were large and complete, yet withal cosy, almost inviting you to sit round them, even on this warm summer's day ; and with all this there was a capital garden to the hotel. Our forefathers fared not badly who took their ease in such an inn.

The landlady apologised, and explained how it was we had to wait so long before we could gain admittance. It appears her lease was just out, and the building having been sold to the Liberals of the town for a club, she was preparing to pack up and leave, and intended in a week or so to shut up the house entirely ; meanwhile, naturally, she was paying but little attention to the business. We felt it was a pity so beautiful and rare a specimen of an old English hostelrie, one of the very best of its kind, should have suffered such a fate. Even it would have appeared more in the natural course of events had the Conservatives purchased it, and the Liberals erected for themselves a new building, with

all the modern improvements up to the latest date, with plenty of plate-glass windows and all such things as the modern builder delighteth in. Probably by this time the quaint old hostelrie is spoilt, irretrievably ruined. The necessary alterations to suit it for its new uses must destroy all the character and beauty of the building. Architecturally speaking, you cannot put new wine into old bottles without spoiling the bottles.

Close to Presteign is a circular hill called 'The Warden,' upon which a castle formerly stood. This has been converted into a public promenade and adorned with plantations, and forms quite an attraction to the town. Near here, too, is Wapley Hill, on which are the most perfect remains of early British earthworks existing in Britain. It was at one time a fortress of the famous Caractacus, but was afterwards occupied by the Romans. It is oval in shape, and of great extent, and well repays a visit.

About a quarter of a mile from Presteign we crossed the little river Endwell that here separates England from Wales. Our road now led us through a fine rolling country, rich and well-cultivated. Halfway to Kington we passed through the picturesque village of Titley, which, with its comfortable-looking cottages and cosy gardens contrasted pleasingly with the barer Welsh hamlets, in which gardens appear to be almost unknown, the profitable pigstye pleasing them better. Possibly the climate, too, may have something to do with the matter, though I hardly think this is alone to blame. We noticed here a

roadside well, hewn out of the solid rock. These little thoughtful considerations for the benefit of the wayfarer are very pleasing. The church was a very fine one, with flying buttresses, but unfortunately we had not time for a closer or more detailed inspection, for the evening was drawing in apace, and warned us to make the best of our way, unless we wished to be benighted.

And now as we are bidding good-bye to Wales, we may as well here give our impressions of Taffy. Well, then, we consider him honest, industrious, saving, and, unlike—very much unlike—his forefathers, of a peaceful disposition. He, like some of his neighbours, and therefore not altogether peculiar on that account, has rather too great a liking for whiskey, and is somewhat too fond of his particular conventicle, outside the pale of which to him there is nothing good to be found, religiously speaking. He is inoffensive and does not wait behind hedges and walls to pay his rent with slugs and bullets. Altogether, to sum up, his virtues are greater than his faults, but he is not a perfect creature; but then, alas for human weakness! where in the world is there perfection in mankind to be found? There are worse men in the world than Master Taffy.

At Kington, we were detained the whole of the next day by the rain, which poured down as though a second deluge was in progress. However, the compulsory halt gave our horses a much-needed rest, so we did not begrudge the loss of one day. In spite of the rain we donned our waterproofs and our ulsters, and set out to inspect the town, which we had almost

wholly to ourselves, but there was not much to see. The church was a fine building with quaint old steps outside up to the tower; inside a fine altar tomb interested us, but that was all. On returning to our hotel we witnessed a rather amusing catastrophe: an old woman, probably a farmer's wife, had evidently been in the town making sundry purchases of crockery and otherwise, and was with a friend driving contentedly home, when all of a sudden the shafts of her ancient gig gave way, and the poor old body and her companion with all their treasures were pitched into the road-way. Fortunately nobody was hurt; but sundry jugs were broken, much to the grief of the elderly party. The pony stood quite still as though such a matter was an everyday occurrence. How is it, I wonder, that other people's misfortunes so often amuse us? We were very sorry for the worthy matron, and would willingly have rendered her any assistance in our power; but, notwithstanding, we could not restrain a hearty laugh at her sudden and unexpected collapse. As there was really nothing further to be seen in the town, we entered a book-seller's shop and made quite a wholesale investment in magazines, &c., in order to while away with them the afternoon at our inn, for there was no prospect of proceeding farther that day. It was at a barn in this town that the famous Mrs. Siddons made her first appearance as an actress.

We had a fine fresh morning following the rain of the day before, with a deliciously soft south-west wind, and we duly appreciated the sunshine after the gloom and wet. Overnight we had held a discussion

and studied our maps and road books, to decide upon our next stage, and had selected Hereford, purposing to make a call upon a friend on the way, provided we could find his place. The country through which we passed was very beautiful and rich; the cornfields were waving about us like a golden sea, through which the good ship—our phaeton—was gaily steering. We passed through some pretty villages, in one of which we noticed a very picturesque old ivy-covered church with a quaint timbered porch. In due course we arrived at Weobly, a curious old-fashioned place, too large to be called a village, and hardly important enough to deserve the title of a town. It possesses a very fine church with a tall and well-proportioned spire, forming quite a landmark for some miles around; also two or three inns or public-houses, but they all looked so uninviting, we decided not to halt here but to proceed on our way, taking our chance of finding better quarters, or in case of failure to camp out for a change. Weobly used to boast ages ago of a very fine castle, the property of the Empress Maud (whoever she might be), but it was taken from her by King Stephen, since which time the place has had a peaceful, though possibly a dull and monotonous existence.

We were now in a hop country, and very beautiful did the hop-poles look, with their clinging bines and their clusters of fruit, far more so than the vines of the Continent that so many people rave about. It is quite astonishing the numbers of Englishmen there are, who with much trouble travel so far, and praise so highly scenes undoubtedly inferior to those

of their own land, but so it is. But then we know 'A prophet has no honour in his own country.'

We had some difficulty in discovering our friend's house, as we had not been there before, and it had to be reached over some cross-country lanes in which there was no one to direct us, and which lanes were not marked upon the map, or, if marked, were shown so indistinctly as to be confusing and misleading. However, we noticed a long way ahead a rambling old building which we judged, from a photograph we had seen, to be the place we were in search of; so we took the road in that direction and at last arrived safely at Brinsop Court, announcing our totally unexpected arrival by a flourish on the horn. This ancient mansion is an edifice of much interest—it looks and speaks to you of the past. The walls are mellowed and stained by the weathering of ages; it was formerly the seat of the Dansey family, previous to which it appears to have been a monastery; the house is surrounded by a deep and wide moat, and it appears originally to have been fortified. It is a grand conglomeration of buildings of all periods, combining together and forming a harmonious and highly picturesque whole. Wordsworth used often to visit here, and there is an excellent portrait of him, done in oils, over the high mantel in the dining-room, placed there in commemoration of his frequent visits. This is the Moated Grange of his poem. In the garden is a beautiful and flourishing cedar, planted by the poet during one of his sojourns here. Our host kindly took us all over the place, and highly delighted and interested we were with it. He told us

artists frequently begged permission to paint some portion of the buildings to introduce into their pictures, and nothing finer of its sort could anywhere be found.

Attached to the house is a remarkably fine banqueting-hall, the original doors and handles of which still exist. They are of quaint and excellent design, so good indeed that we took sketches of some of them. At the top of a stone gate-post in the grounds is a most curious figure of a man cross-legged, playing on some instrument resembling a violin; this exceedingly quaint and original bit of sculpture had, no doubt, some special history and meaning, but our host was unable to give us any information on the subject.

These ancient mansions have an indescribable charm for me: one's imagination can run full riot in them; romance is writ in their every stone; they speak not of the present, and one can, without great difficulty, picture and fill their halls once more with the men and women of the long ago. When we tread upon their court-yards and oak-floored chambers, our feet press on hallowed, haunted ground.

We bade a reluctant farewell to Brinsop Court, and proceeded once more on our way to Hereford. Drops of rain were falling when we started, and before we reached our destination a regular downpour tested our waterproofs to the utmost. About a mile before the city we noticed a stone cross erected at a junction of three roads. This was built here in the year 1345, by one of the Bishops of Hereford, as a spot whereon to hold the markets, a pestilence

at that time raging in the place. It is known by the name of the White Cross, and here the townspeople and country folk met to transact their business. We drove up to the Green Dragon, half-drenched, but within we found the hotel so cheery and comfortable, we soon forgot all about our wetting. It was a great comfort to be able to drive under the old-fashioned archway, and descend from our carriage with our belongings in shelter.

Hereford is an interesting old city, and we spent the whole of the next morning in exploring the place. The grand old cathedral naturally claimed our first attention. This fine ecclesiastical pile was erected in the reign of William the Conqueror, upon the ruins of an earlier religious edifice built as early as 825, and which was destroyed by fire. It has suffered much at the hands of the restorer: Wyatt, the architect, living in the last century, being the chief offender in this respect, and of whom it has been truly said, 'He touched nothing that he did not spoil.' He was let loose upon the cathedral, and did, consequently, mischief incalculable. He coolly pulled down the whole of the fine western *façade*, he completely spoilt its nave, and generally committed inconceivable havoc. This self-sufficient and conceited being, it is said, in his desecration of Salisbury cathedral, 'swept away screens, chapels, and porches; desecrated and destroyed the tombs of warriors and prelates; obliterated ancient paintings; flung stained glass by cart-loads into the city ditch; and levelled with the ground the campanile of the same date as the building itself, which stood on the north side of the

churchyard.' From any more Wyatts may England be delivered! We were fortunate in having a very polite and inteiligent verger to show us over the cathedral. Some of the tombs were very interesting: we especially noticed those of a certain bishop and dean, who had been inseparable friends in life and now rest side by side. From each slab covering their graves, a hand projects over to the other; these are clasped together. According to the inscription, the bishop died on the '18 *Die Maii*, 1691,' the dean on the '24 *Die Augusti*, 1691,' and at the bottom, running across both tombs, is the following legend: '*In vitâ conjuncti. In morte non divisi.*' In another spot we were shown an exceedingly handsome and elaborate altar-tomb, erected by a certain brave knight of old, who shall be nameless, to the memory of his wife and child. This worthy knight ordered his recumbent figure to be placed on it beside his beloved spouse, and caused an inscription to be carved around to the effect—the date of his decease being left blank, to be filled in after the same took place—that he was buried there by her side. But, alas! for the faithlessness of man, he married in due course another wife, and was interred elsewhere; and so the blanks remain even unto this day. But for those who read the inscription, and are unacquainted with the history of the case, the vacant spaces appear exceeding strange.

We noticed, also, the tomb of Sir Richard de la Bere, his two wives, and twenty-one children (quite a quiverful); all these were represented on a brass plate, though, we presumed, not buried here. We

were sorry to see that many of the brasses had been stolen from the grave-stones of several knights, whose figures, and swords, and crossed legs, were still plainly visible, and showing where the metal had been so sacrilegiously removed. Some of these old brasses had been purchased by a collector in London, who, finding from the inscriptions upon them that they had formerly belonged to the cathedral at Hereford, at once returned them there; and as far as possible they have been replaced in their old positions on the monuments. Thus, probably since the Commonwealth, these old memorials of departed greatness have been knocking about the country, hidden and lost amongst piles of worthless rubbish; and now, once again, they have been brought to light and restored to their proper places. If they could only speak to us, what a chequered career, what a curious history, might they not reveal! Here, as elsewhere, we noticed that Cromwell's stern Puritan soldiers destroyed or damaged the faces of most of the knights, but left the rest of their tombs unharmed, provided there were no sculptured saints or figures upon the same, which were to them much as a red rag is to a bull. If there was a saint or a figure upon it, the monument was doomed. The last of the tombs we noticed was a fine modern one to the late Dean, designed by the late Sir Gilbert Scott; and this we noticed with particular pleasure, as being the only modern monument we had ever anywhere seen worthy at all to be compared to the work of the olden days. The verger showed us a very ancient

and most curious map of the world, evidently done in the pre-Columbian times, when America was an unknown land; it is plain to see that the artist, whoever he was, had no idea that the world was a round globe. In the library here is Wickliffe's original Bible. This used to be chained to the desk on which it was read.

Near to the cathedral is the Castle-green, a pleasant spot which occupies the ground where of old stood an eminent fortress. This forms now a most agreeable promenade for the worthy citizens of the place. In this fine square is a tall column erected to the memory of Admiral Lord Nelson, and in honour of his glorious victories. Evidently Hereford is a patriotic city.

The unpretending little theatre here has, by some happy chance and strange freak of fortune, been the nursery of many distinguished actors and actresses, amongst whom Garrick, Siddons, Clive, Kemble, besides many others, may be mentioned. Not a bad roll-call for a small local town!

Garrick was a native of the place, having been born in the Angel inn, in Widemarsh-street, an ancient hostelrie long since pulled down. In a house in Pipe-lane, which has also suffered the same fate, the notorious and beautiful Nell Gwynn, the favourite of Charles II., was born.

In the afternoon we had a delightful drive of sixteen miles on to Ledbury; but though the scenery was very beautiful, there was nothing on the way worthy of particular mark, besides the fine park of Stoke Edith, through which we passed, and a

nunnery near Hereford, into the peaceful and restful-looking convent-garden of which we could just get a peep by standing up in the phaeton, there being no law against such proceedings, and we saw the nuns busily gathering fruit. We wondered whether they were happy and contented with their lot.

At Ledbury we patronised the 'Feathers,' a very old and antique-looking, but a very comfortable old-fashioned inn. We found the town to be in keeping with the hotel: the only thing of interest in the place appeared to be the church, and this we arranged with the clerk overnight to visit early next morning. This fine old building, of Saxon origin, is peculiar in having the tower separate from the main edifice. Our worthy guide informed us that this tower was formerly a portion of the keep of an old castle which stood close against the church, and that was the reason why it was detached. What authority, if any, he had for his statement, I know not, nor could I discover. It is a very peculiar and unlikely place for a castle to be erected, within a few yards of a large religious edifice.

Inside the church were several interesting old monuments, some with quaint inscriptions. The clerk pointed out one to us as a curiosity: it read as follows:—

In Memory of
JOHN HALL,
Gent.
Who departed this life
ye 31st. of April, 1734, Æts. 73.

We had never before, in all our rambles, found a tombstone with the impossible date of the 31st of April upon it. I know of no reason why there should be that extra day in the year 1734. We noticed, too, an antique brass, bearing date 1490, in a most excellent state of preservation—in fact, it was almost in as good a condition as when it was first placed where it now is, and that was four centuries ago, all but six years! The ancient lettering was perfectly legible; it bore the very handmarks of the old engraver's tools; we felt that they were the very *ipsissima saxa* which he had placed there. It somehow impressed us more than the many pretentious monuments in predurable stone around. Before it we felt that the mighty dead overshadowed the puny living. The spire of the church has been twice struck by lightning, but, strange to say, without any serious damage being done.

We were informed of a curious legal fact connected with this part of the world—namely, that the property in the borough is subject to borough English—that is, in case of intestacy the freehold property descends to the youngest, to the exclusion of the eldest son. So it is rather a disadvantage instead of the reverse being an eldest son here. What was the origin of this quaint old law we could not discover; it is lost in the dim uncertainty of antiquity.

After our inspection of the church we once more got under weigh and proceeded on our voyage, steering Malvern-wards. Ledbury had shown us all we cared to see, and we were not sorry to

be in the fresh, free, open country again. What a glorious drive we had that bright and joyous summer morning! How the birds sang, and how gay all nature looked! A colonial minister of considerable reputation, speaking of his impressions of England, has said, 'what struck him most was the sombre colouring of the landscape; nothing but brown and faded green to be seen.' I wonder what portion of the country he visited. Was it the suburbs of Birmingham or the outskirts of Manchester? or was it a case of eyes and no eyes? I wish the aforesaid minister had only been with us that day. The colouring all around was wonderful: rich without being gaudy, and the varied tints were endless. True, there were no startling contrasts; but the countless hues, blending and harmonising with each other, were far more grateful and pleasing to the educated eye.

It was indeed a pleasant drive along those wooded Herefordshire lanes, equally beautiful, though not so renowned, as the Devonshire ones, and almost as narrow. Before us all the way, standing boldly out against the sky—a mass of purple and grey—were the rounded forms of the Malvern heights. There was the solitary Beacon hill rising stately from the surrounding sea-like plains, and from the top of which is perhaps the finest and most extensive all-round view in England. It was one of the heights selected in the olden times, before railways and telegraphs were known, as a signal station. Bonfires, on important occasions, were lighted there. It was on this hill the beacon was fired to give

notice of the approach of the so-called Invincible Armada, when

> Twelve fair counties saw the blaze
> From Malvern's lonely height.

We crossed the range of hills through a miniature pass, and to the right of us we noticed an ancient British camp, consisting of a series of earthworks round the isolated height called the Herefordshire Beacon. This was one of the renowned Caractacus' fortresses, which he long held against the mighty power of Imperial Rome. We had for the last several days been driving through a country made historic by the splendid and long-continued resistance of this grand old British warrior. Never before did we appreciate, or had we even any adequate knowledge of the gallantry, generalship, or the bravery of this wonderful man. It was only after viewing his many battle-grounds and strongholds—which latter, after the lapse of several centuries, still plainly show their forms and uses—that we learnt the greatness of this almost forgotten king. Surely he was no ordinary barbarian who for so long, and so successfully, was able to defy the greatest military power the world had ever known. The general plans and positions of his earthworks, in connection with the line of country he defended, proclaimed a genius of no ordinary power, and had he possessed but a tithe of the resources of his opponents, I doubt not but that it would have fared badly with them.

Crossing into Worcestershire, we drove along the eastern slope of the Malvern range, passing through the pretty little village of Malvern Wells

en route. The whole way we had spread out before us a most magnificent panorama, consisting of a country of woods and fields of waving grain, of golden orchards and fruitful hop-lands, interspersed with towns, cities, and countless villages and peaceful hamlets, many of which latter were completely drowned in greenery, through which their church-spires peeped, which, with the blue haze of upward curling smoke, alone revealed where they lay.

Yonder, some ten miles or more, straight ahead of us and plainly visible, was the ever-faithful city of Worcester, the cathedral standing proudly over the city and completely dominating the same, the very embodiment in stone of ecclesiastical supremacy. How the weary and footsore pilgrims must have been struck by such a view suddenly breaking upon their longing vision! Those journeying the way we came, on or near this spot doubtless (as tradition asserts) knelt down at this first and impressive sight of their destination.

At Malvern we stayed at the best of all hotels, a friend's house—as we approached which we sounded our horn, to let those expecting us know we had safely arrived. Presently a welcome figure at the porch and a waving handkerchief proved it had been heard. We had to sit up late that night, and had to recount the many particulars and adventures connected with our drive so far.

CHAPTER XVI.

Malvern—The Priory Church—Fine Stained-glass Windows—Worcester—The Cathedral—The most Ancient Royal Monument in England—Worcester Porcelain Works—China Painting—Upton—Tewkesbury—An Old Inn—Tewkesbury Abbey—Monasteries—Wonderful Relics—Monks and Miracles—A Pleasant Town—Reapers and Gleaners—A very Ancient Sign-post—Wayside Memorials—Fruit Farming—Wormington Grange—Maps—An Ancient Hostelrie.

MALVERN is a beautiful town, delightfully situated, and fortunate in its modern buildings. The many charming and picturesque residences all standing in their own grounds, mostly of considerable architectural excellence, give a most pleasing appearance to the place, while here and there the remains of ancient buildings afford an agreeable flavour of antiquity.

By far the most interesting old building in Malvern is the very fine priory church. This was formerly a portion of an abbey founded by Edward the Confessor, and at the time when monasteries were dissolved and robbed, and their treasures divided among the spoilers, this was purchased by the inhabitants of the place, and fortunately preserved from destruction. The splendid gateway in the later English style is a most perfect, rich, and beautiful specimen of carved stone-work, but the chief glory of the old edifice is the wonderfully fine

stained-glass of the fifteenth century. The tracery of the great east window is simply superb in its effects of rich and delicate colouring; it is almost faultless; through it

> the very light
> Streams with a colouring of heroic days.

In fact the priory church at Malvern contains some of the finest specimens of the late Gothic stained glass anywhere to be found. Gorgeous is the proper term for it, gorgeous it is but not gaudy; such glass was never made before and has never been made since, and probably never will be again; the secret of the art is lost, has gone from us for ever. We cannot even approach to the wonderful translucent and iridescent qualities it possesses; age may possibly (though this is just doubtful) have something to do with this latter, but that is not all. Look carefully at a square of the glass against a clear sky space, notice how rich and transparent, yet how varied, is every inch of it, and yet notice at the same time how metallic it appears, something in effect not easy to describe, yet very different from the meaningless stained work of to-day—though this is infinitely better than that of yesterday, poor though it is when compared to the finest specimens of ancient times.

From Malvern we drove to Worcester and back, in order to inspect that historic and pleasant city, and to visit its fine old cathedral and renowned porcelain works. The country between the two places is a perfect idyl; the road took us between orchards of apple and pear trees,—how lovely their

white blossoms must look in the spring!—whose golden fruit hung temptingly over the roadway. And, shall I confess it?—yes, I will—we stole some of the fruit as we passed along, it appeared so delicious. But the old proverb, 'Stolen fruit always tastes the sweetest,' did not hold good in our case, for our apples tasted sour exceedingly, so much so that we had to throw them away. They must have either been unripe or of a non-eating sort, probably they were grown for cider. To the eye they looked a rich mellow ripe yellow, in fact everything that could be desired—'All, however, is not gold that glistens.' We passed on our way one or two fine old country churches, with great yew-trees growing in their yards. The real reason of these trees being so generally found in such places is not well known. In olden times when the bow and arrow decided many a hard-fought field, as the rifle now does, it was the law of the land that in every churchyard several of these trees should be planted, to provide shafts for the yeoman warriors. We may even now see relics of yews which provided shafts that won the day at Crecy, and secured the victory at Agincourt, and gained the field of Poictiers.

The cathedral at Worcester dates from the thirteenth century, and has been thoroughly and most successfully restored under the direction of the late Sir Gilbert Scott. Successful and excellently carried out though the restoration has been, it has given to the grand old pile a new fresh look which, though unavoidable, is not altogether pleasing. Within the building, what interested us by far the

most, was the ancient altar-tomb to King John; this is, I believe, the most ancient royal monument in Great Britain, and is moreover in an excellent state of preservation. There is also an exceedingly quaint and curious antique Gothic tomb erected to the memory of Prince Arthur, son of Henry the Seventh.

We next inspected the Royal Porcelain Works for which the city is so famous. We were fortunate in procuring an intelligent and obliging guide, and we spent a very pleasant and an all-too-short two hours in witnessing the various processes of manufacture of the renowned Worcester china. The art and skill required even to make an ordinary tea-cup is very considerable; we were quite unaware before the many hands through which this little every-day article had to pass before it was ready for the market. Perhaps the most interesting room in the works was that devoted to the artists painting the various devices on ornamental vases and dessert services. Great judgment and a thorough knowledge of the colours used is necessary in this department, for the intense heat in burning the tints into the glaze affects them in various ways: a blue will turn purple, a yellow orange, and so forth; so that a painted plate before and after baking presents a very different appearance—a matter of fact I know to my cost, for on returning home I invested in the necessary colours and materials, and painted myself a large plaque of which I was very proud—before it went to the kiln at least. On receiving it back from the same my pride had a very severe

fall; the transformation of the colouring was a grievous sight to behold. It is not pleasant to paint a sky blue and find it turned to purple; and to find your green leaves turned into red ones is not an agreeable surprise. After that experience I stuck to my water and oil painting. With them, at least, I had the satisfaction of knowing, however badly done, if I painted a sky blue it would remain so, and I had no fear of my cattle turning green and my grass red. We were informed that even with every care and precaution, and the knowledge gained by long experience, the colours would sometimes alter in the baking. I can imagine nothing more dispiriting than to spend hours, if not days, over a piece of work and have it utterly spoilt in one short hour. No wonder hand-painted china is a costly luxury.

Our sojourn at Malvern over we proceeded once more on our homeward journey. A delightful drive of some ten miles or so through a rich pastoral country of great beauty, passing on our way the quaint little village of Upton with its still quainter church, brought us to the ancient and picturesque town of Tewkesbury. We had so many comfortable old-fashioned hotels to choose from here that we had some difficulty in deciding which we should honour with our presence. We eventually, after a drive of inspection round the town—a course we generally pursued as being preferable to putting up at the first likely inn, when perchance a better one might be found for the trouble of looking for it—selected the Swan, and had no reason to repent our choice; although we almost regretted

afterwards we had overlooked a very pretty old timbered hostelrie pleasantly situated just outside the town, it looked so clean and cosy, and was quite gay with flowers—always a good sign. It had the initials T. K. and date, 1696, carved over the doorway, and with its high-pitched roof, gable ends, and tall stacks of chimneys, formed quite a picture.

Having secured our quarters, we started out to see the famous old abbey-church, over the great east window of which there have been so many disputes by architects, who have not yet settled the question of the why and wherefore it was built as it is, more a wall of light than a window, and probably never will. Possibly chance has had more to do with the plan than any premeditated design. This church originally belonged to an old abbey founded here, it is said, by one Fitz-Hamon, in 1105; but other histories say by the Saxons, at a much earlier date. It is a superb structure, chiefly of Norman architecture, and contains the relics and tombs of many distinguished men and warriors. Amongst others, here rests the remains of Prince Edward, son of Henry VI., who was cruelly put to death after the battle of Tewkesbury, which took place in some meadows near the town, one of which still retains to this day the name of 'The Bloody Field.'

The fine old gateway which once formed a portion of the entrance to the abbey still exists, and the cloisters of the ancient monastery are still to be traced. The quaint carvings of heads, images, and numerous possible and impossible animals, cut here and there on the outside stonework, and forming in

places the various gargoyles, are most interesting—the very demons seem to look down benignly upon one. Grotesque they are, but not terrible ; kindly, if mischievous, imps they appear. Of saintly faces there are no traces. Why, I wonder, did the godly monks of old prefer the demons to the saints? Possibly they deemed the grinning and half-horrible expressions they could give to their deeply cut faces, more effective, in an architectural point of view, than the necessarily placid, peaceful countenances of the saints, and they were right.

These old monastic fanes have a notable place in the early history of Christianity ; they afforded the only refuge to the persecuted, and were the sole home of learning, in the days of oppressions and tumults. In those times, when might was right, they upheld the spirit of the Gospel.

Strangely to say, when a new era arrived and liberty dawned, they (till then the only home of freedom) were conspicuous by their hostility to the new order of things, and upheld rather the letter, than the spirit, of Christianity. That this was so there can, I think, be no doubt ; but why it was the case, is a very difficult question to answer. The architecture of these religious edifices—in England, at least—was of the most perfect type, solemnly grand yet chastely simple, beautiful and graceful but still massive and overawing. The world had never seen their like before, and never will again. When the spoiler's hand laid many an abbey low, most of the unfortunate abbots accepted the inevitable with as good a grace as possible under the trying

circumstances, and were generally pensioned off with a paltry 100*l.* a year, their estates, and the rest of their worldly treasures, being confiscated and divided amongst Court favourites and others. Others were, however, not so easily disposed of; some resisted to the last, and remained true to what they considered their trust, remaining 'faithful even unto death.' One cannot but sympathise with and honour such men. Alas! their numbers were but few.

But whilst doubtless there were many devout monks and holy abbots, still there were amongst them some (not many, we may hope) who must have been either knaves or fools; so at least one would imagine, if we may trust some of the reports of the lists of treasures found in their houses, made by order, at the time of the dissolution. These would tend to show that the ignorance and credulity of the common people at least, were shamefully imposed upon. Some of the later abbots were certainly very ignorant men, and may have actually believed in their possessions. It must be remembered that without some sacred relic or relics, an establishment of this kind could hardly compete with its many rivals. The more the number and supposed value and virtues of the relics, the greater the fame of the religious foundation. From an old book in my possession I have selected from a long list a few of the chief relics held in high repute, taken from one of these old monasteries. They are as follows:—

A finger of St. John the Baptist.

A tooth of our Lord.

The hem of our Lord's garment, which cured the diseased woman.

A tear which our Lord shed over Lazarus ; it was preserved by an angel, who gave it in a phial to Mary Magdalene.

A lock of hair of Mary Magdalene.

A hem of Joseph's garment.

Where are all these relics now? Their inherent virtues have not preserved them, although in their day, doubtless, they were credited with performing, at various times, many wonderful miracles and astounding cures. It once happened, so tradition states—possibly it happened more than once—that a certain pious pilgrim, having visited various abbeys, actually had, in the course of his wanderings, seen three separate skulls of St. John the Baptist. Puzzled and beset with anxious doubts—doubts he could not calm—he sought in his trouble a certain worthy abbot, and confessed his perplexities to him. The reply of the holy father was worthy of the occasion. 'God has been pleased, my son,' he said, 'so to multiply and reproduce these skulls, to aid the devotion of the faithful!' It may not be out of place here, and it may be of interest, to give a list of relics as shown to an Englishman in a monastery in Italy, in the year 1670 ; one would almost think invention would become exhausted in its endeavour to supply relics to meet the demand of the credulous. The following, then, is a list of the Italian monastery's treasures :—

The very inscription on the cross.

A piece of the wood of the same.

Some of the thorns of the crown of thorns.

A bit of the manger.

Part of the chains in which St. Peter and St. Paul were held in Rome.

The towel with which Christ wiped the feet of His Apostles.
A piece from the table cloth used at the last supper.

I was about to compare these with the English relics, but we know comparisons are odious. Difficult as it may appear to believe in the authenticity of the above articles, it is comparatively nothing to the faith required to credit the miracles performed by and attested, of the early saints; for instance, we know, or rather we are told, that

St. Denys had his head cut off, he did not care for that,
He took it up and carried it two miles without a hat.

But enough of monks, monasteries, their miracles and relics; let us once more get back into the town. Tewkesbury has a pleasant, homelike look; the various houses, each differently planned, have evidently been built to suit the especial whims and requirements of their original owners. Such dwellings impress the beholder very differently to the stiff formal rows of town houses, which generally resemble each other as do peas in a pod: each one is just like its neighbour, and into them the inhabitants have to squeeze and accommodate themselves, whether they suit their special wants or not. In fact, instead of the house being built to suit the people, the people have to suit the house. Here the contrary is the case, one house has evidently been built upon a certain plan because the owner would have it so; another in a different way because its owner wished it thus; and still another has had to accommodate itself to the circumstances of place and position, and so on. Such an irregularity gives

a naturalness and an individuality to the town, which is so conspicuous by its absence in most modern cities.

The fields around Tewkesbury have been in times past dyed with some of the best of English blood, not only in the Wars of the Roses, but in the times of the Commonwealth. The country immediately surrounding the town was the scene of many a sanguinary conflict.

We had a splendid morning, with a slight haze, giving promise of a fine and hot day on which to continue our journey. We started betimes and were early on our way, as we did not quite know where we should spend the night. We were steering a course across country to Stratford-on-Avon, which town, if we were compelled to do so, we could have reached that evening, but it would have been a heavy and a long day's work. We hoped, however, to find quarters somewhere on our road ; but as we only passed through villages, large and small, this was, of course, a matter of chance. Fortune might favour us, or it might not ; we deemed it therefore advisable to have plenty of time on our hands, so that, if necessary, we could push on to Stratford-on-Avon.

As we proceeded we noticed on all sides men busily gathering in the harvest—I was going to say reaping the golden fields of corn (England's goldfields, and, I fear, now-a-days not very profitable ones) and perhaps I should have been correct, but it was not with sickles, for machines were now everywhere doing the work. It is to my mind a very obvious and regrettable fact, that with all our modern

improvements, however much they may advance the welfare and prosperity of the country, we lose so much that is romantic and beautiful. For instance, what could an artist make of a picture with a matter-of-fact nineteenth century reaping-machine, levelling the crops with a mathematical accuracy? No picturesque reapers, and consequently no gleaners so dear to painters, the machines doing the work all too well to allow the delightful old world custom of gleaning a chance of existing.

Some few miles on our journey we came to four cross roads, with a sign-post of stone, with four different arms directing the wayfarer the way he should go. Noticing a brass plate on the same, with an old inscription upon it, we descended and inspected the same, thinking it might prove of interest. The following are the words inscribed, and which we copied :—

> Edmund Attwood of the Vine Tree
> At the first time erected me ;
> And freely he did this bestow,
> Strange travellers the way to show.
>
> ———
>
> Six generations past and gone,
> Repaired by Charles Attwood of Teddington.

That filled up the brass plate; but below, cut on the stone, was this legend :—

> Ten generations past and gone,
> Repaired by Alice Attwood of Teddington.[1]

Ten generations ago! How many years would that be, I wonder? Possibly five hundred or even more. Five long centuries! and if so, the original

[1] August 10, 1876.

and worthy individual, Edmund Attwood, must have 'at the first time erected' this sign-post in the year of grace 1376 or thereabouts; this is, of course, taking the average of fifty years for a generation. These old wayside memorials are most interesting. We had come across but few on this journey, but in driving through Yorkshire on our way to Scotland on a previous tour, we had found several, all more or less of interest; perhaps the most so of all was a beautiful sculptured stone pillar, with a sun-dial, and a brass tablet attached, with a crest and coat of arms engraved on the same and coloured, all in perfect condition, though mellowed and toned with the storms of centuries. This pillar we found standing on a lonely moorland, as it had stood for over two hundred years; it is known locally to this day by the name of the 'Countess's Pillar,' and was erected by Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, in 1656, so the inscription says, 'as a memorial of her last parting in this place with her good and pious mother . .' 'In memory whereof she left an annuity of four pounds, to be distributed to y^e^ poor within y^e^ parrish, every 2nd day of April, upon y^e^ stone table here hard by.' The stone table is still there, much worn on the top, where doubtless the charity has been handed over to the poor for ages past, and may be still even to this day, for all we know. There is something very touching, almost impressive, coming unexpectedly, and generally in lonely situations, across these memorials of the long ago and of the generations long since departed, and gone from us for ever. They speak to us in the present,

of the past. May they long remain, and may no ruthless hand ever be raised against them! They should be guarded with jealous care; but, alas! this is not always the case.

From the ancient sign-post we had a very pleasant road on to Broadway, the first village of any size marked on our map along our route. In one portion of our way the road passed through fields planted with plum-trees with gooseberry bushes between. We learnt upon enquiry that this was an experiment of some local landlord, who was about to erect a jam factory on the estate, and thus open up a new era in English farming. We wished him every success in his new enterprise. He certainly deserves to succeed, whether he does or not. We almost feared his new departure would prove a failure: it is by no means an easy feat to start an entirely new method of cultivation. Shortly after passing the fruit farm, which was of considerable extent, we drove by a fine mansion, situated in a beautiful park, in which we saw herds of red deer. By our map we noticed this enviable spot was called Wormington Grange. And here perhaps I may remark for the benefit of any of my readers who may think of following our good example of driving across country, that we found Smith and Son's Reduced Ordnance Maps, published at one shilling, mounted on cloth and in a book cover, not only most useful, but very correct. They can be procured for all parts of England, are not too bulky, are easy of reference, and not liable to be damaged or torn by wind and rain. We always travel with a selection of these

most useful maps. I know of none better or so good for the purpose, and if beforehand you trace your probable route with a red pencil, it is easily followed by the eye whilst driving, even in boisterous and stormy weather.

A few more miles now brought us to Broadway, a large rambling village, possessing many capital well-built stone houses, and, above all, a delightful old inn, a very picture in itself, and a perfect specimen of the famous hostelries of past times. Many-gabled it was, with picturesque, mullioned windows (why will they not build such now in place of the horrid sash contrivances?), quaintly-shaped stacks of chimneys it had, breaking pleasantly the sky line; and through the archway we saw the ample yard. The time-honoured signpost was there in all its glory, with its painted signboard swinging restlessly backwards and forwards in the wind. Surely, we might have searched fair England over for our ideal of an ancient coaching inn of the good old days, and not have found one to come so near to our imagination of what the reality should be. We noticed the date, 1620, carved over the doorway. All the rooms, of course, had the usual old-fashioned beams across; the one in our bed-room was decorated with raised vine-leaves and grapes. A beam or even more than one across a ceiling, is to my mind a very pleasant feature in a room; it breaks the dead monotony of so much white plaster, and cuts up the disagreeable mass of flat space; modern architects —with some few notable exceptions—however think otherwise. Inside the building was a fine

ball-room, showing that our ancestors knew how to enjoy themselves.

A quaint old haunted-looking bed-room we had, with a huge four-poster and other furniture of an ancient date, and in my sleep somehow things got mixed up, and I dreamt that I was a traveller benighted here in the days of good Queen Bess.

CHAPTER XVII.

Wiltersey—England's Mecca—Shakespeare's Birthplace and Grave—New Place—Stratford-on-Avon Church—Shakspearean Museum—Charlecote Park—Justice Shallow, his True Character—Warwick—Driving under Churches—Leicester's Hospital—Our Old Buildings—Fine Old Tombs—More Monkish Relics—American Travellers—England in Six Days—Warwick Castle—Romantic Approach—A Perfect Storehouse of Treasures—Guy's Porridge-pot and Armour—Queen Anne's Portmanteau—Cedars Planted by the Crusaders—The Warwick Vase—Guy's and Cæsar's Towers—The Dungeons and their Inscribed Walls.

Above Broadway the wooded hills rise boldly. On the top of these is an old tower, from which there is a magnificent view all around. We had traversed these heights on a former journey returning home from Devonshire and Cornwall, and a glorious drive it was through ancient parks of grand old oaks and other forest trees, with the wild red deer visible now and again. But now fortunately our road—for the climb over the hills is very severe—lay on a level running along the foot of the woods. At the first little village we passed through, Wiltersey by name, a picturesque, though a sleepy-looking spot, we observed a pillar-post with a notice written thereon, to the effect that the next collection would be on Monday. So in this out-of-the-world easy-going hamlet, they do not even have their letters collected daily—goodness knows when they are delivered,

probably as frequently. We passed that morning through a pleasant landscape—a landscape of rich meadows and golden corn-fields, of fruitful orchards and flowery gardens, with old grey weather-stained mansions here and there, and comfortable farm-houses, and lastly, but not leastly, contented-looking cottages. It was a lovely country, peaceful, livable, and most thoroughly English—a country to be found almost anywhere in rural England; but, none the less beautiful because so general—rather it is not enough appreciated on that account. I by no means sneer at continental travel, quite the contrary; but I maintain that were such scenery foreign, Englishmen would travel from far to see it, and be loud in praise of its mellow, homelike, restful beauty. What is it a sign of, I wonder, that it is left to Americans almost wholly, to write of and describe the beauties of our land? We next passed through Weston-sub-Edge, another picturesque village, with an old market-cross with stone steps, now used as a sun-dial. Some of the old houses here had finely carved oak porches, covered with virginia creeper, fragrant honeysuckle, or sweet-scented jessamine. The old market-crosses, of which so few now exist, were, before the dissolution of the monasteries, to be found in almost every village and town; it is a sad pity that so few now remain. They were often structures of great merit, but Puritan intolerance or zeal, whichever we may please to call it, left but a small number of these ancient monuments standing, for future generations to admire. The antiquary must be thankful that even a few have been left undisturbed.

By midday we arrived at the bright little town of Stratford-on-Avon—England's Mecca—for do not people from all over the world make pilgrimages to the glorious shrines here of the birthplace and grave of the immortal bard, coming even, and in thousands, from across the broad and stormy Atlantic? They do not come certainly with staff, sandalled shoon and scallop shell, as did the palmers of old; but theirs is none the less a pilgrimage, though they journey by railway and steamer.

Like so many of our towns and villages Stratford-on-Avon has a reason for its name; it is evidently derived from the Saxon word *Strat* or *Straet* for road or street, and the *ford* refers to the passage of the river here; this being at one time the old highway from London to Birmingham.

Of course we went to visit the two hallowed spots—the one where Shakespeare made his appearance into the world, the other where he now rests. But before we did so, madam would first go to the post office for letters (for Stratford was one of the ports of call on our voyage, where we were certain we should touch at, so we ordered our correspondence here). I verily believe she was far more anxious for her letters than to see the relics of Master William Shakespeare; for was not there an especial epistle amongst the number, quickly selected out of a host of others by the post mark, that brought news of her little treasure far away. How her face brightened up as she read the missive; yes, the wee one was quite well and happy, and then, after reading it once over again, she said she was ready to go anywhere!

Shakespeare, besides being born and buried here, lived a great portion of his life at New Place, in the town, in which house he died. Alas! the building was ruthlessly torn down in 1759 by a Mr. Gastrell, the then owner, in revenge for his having been too highly assessed for poor's-rates. So that now all that attracts the pilgrim's attention is the cradle and the grave. Shakespeare's house is a humble antiquated building of two storeys, with lattice windows and diamond panes; the ground floor is flagged with stones; the rooms above are floored with oak and are very low. The ceilings and plastered walls are covered—no, disfigured is the right word—with pencil signatures, there must be thousands upon thousands of them. We were considerably surprised to notice, amongst the number, the autographs of several distinguished men, genuine we presumed; we had thought this was one of the sole prerogatives of 'Arry, but it appeared in this case at any rate we were mistaken. It is really too bad to deface the walls thus, as there is a book provided for those who care to inscribe their names here—we did not. The only signature that interested us was that of Sir Walter Scott, which he had written with a diamond upon one of the small panes, the glass of which was also so scratched over with numerous other names that we had some difficulty in discovering amongst the number that of the 'Wizard of the North;' but when we did manage to trace it out, we could read it plainly enough.

We next went to the church. It is a fine Gothic structure and externally impressive and of great

beauty. It possesses a well-proportioned and tapering spire of a great height. The situation of the building by the side of the placid Avon is perfect. Internally the edifice is not so pleasing, it has an uncomfortably new look, and is spoilt by ugly galleries —galleries in this famous Gothic pile and shrine! What would the builders of old think, could they come back for a brief time to life, and see their grand work thus marred? In the chancel is Shakespeare's tomb; over his vault is a stone slab with the well-known words in quaint old-world English:

> Good frend, for Jesvs sake forbeare,
> To digge the dvst encloased heare;
> Bleste be y^e^ man y^t^ spares thes stones,
> And cvrst be he y^t^ moves my bones.

On the wall near by is the famous monumental bust, the only correct and trustworthy portrait of the bard, the entablature over which, supported by two Corinthian columns of dark marble, contains his crest and arms. The bust is the size of life and is of carved stone, it was originally, in the good fashion of the time, painted in natural colours. It is said to have been sculptured from a cast taken of the poet immediately after death. The colouring of the bust remained intact till the year 1793, when Malone, the Shakespearean commentator, had it all coated over with white paint. This shameful act of Vandalism called forth the following well-merited lines:

> Stranger to whom this monument is shown,
> Invoke the poet's curse upon Malone;
> Whose meddling zeal his barbarous taste betrays,
> And daubs his tombstone as he marr'd his plays.

For one hundred and sixty years had the bust continued in its primal condition till Malone disfigured it, and for sixty-eight long years did it remain thus disfigured. In 1861, however, the white paint was carefully removed, and the original colouring restored, as far as possible, so that now the monument appears much the same as when first erected. On one side of Shakespeare lies his wife, who died in 1623, on the other side his favourite daughter. In such good and beloved company he should surely sleep peacefully! In the north aisle of the Church is a magnificent altar-tomb to George Carew, Earl of Totness, and to Joia his Countess. The figures are of alabaster and coloured. Over them rises a superb carved canopy, highly wrought and ornamented. The Earl held office as Master of the Ordnance under Elizabeth, and also under James I. There are besides various other ancient tombs, some dating as far back as the fifteenth century: these are both interesting and beautiful; they are, however, but little noticed, and the worthy dame who acted the part of *cicerone* to us appeared surprised that we took any heed of them. Pilgrims come here to Shakespeare's shrine and that alone and they refuse to see anything not connected with the immortal bard. We of course did not neglect to visit the Shakespearean museum connected with his house; some of the relics are interesting; others, to say the least, are of doubtful authenticity. There are some genuine manuscripts shown, and also some copies of the oldest folio editions extant of his works. There is an ancient carved oak arm-chair in which he sat

at the Falcon inn at Bidford, as the president of a club there ; a jug which was his property—possibly ; an old desk, much hacked about, from the grammar school which he attended, and which might or might not have been used by him. There is also a piece of wood of a mulberry tree he planted in the garden of New Place, and which was cut down when the house was pulled down, and even the juice of its fruit is preserved in a small bottle, *à la* the blood of St. Januarius. Besides these, there are a host of other relics, which required on our part as great a power of belief as would the relics of some of the old monasteries related in a previous chapter.

About half-way between the two towns, but nearer Stratford than Warwick, is Charlecote park and church, a spot indissolubly associated with the name of Shakespeare. The house itself, which is not shown to visitors, is a noble structure erected early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, standing in an extensive and well-timbered park, coeval with the mansion —a very beau ideal of an old English home. Round one side of the park the Avon flows :

> Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge,
> He overtaketh in his pilgrimage.

The grey turrets of the house rise romantically and boldly from out of the umbrageous mass of green foliage, which half-hides and half-reveals the stately pile, which has now, altogether, probably much the same aspect it had in the bard's time. Mr. Lucy, the present owner of this superb demesne, very naturally is unwilling to have his house turned into a show place. Some people appear to think this ill-natured

of him—such individuals would probably be the very first to object to have their villas invaded.

It appears very hard lines that an English gentleman cannot enjoy his home in peace and privacy if he so choose. Nor do I at all clearly see what right anyone has to expect that Mr. Lucy should allow his house and grounds to be overrun by strangers (and those not always considerate ones, as I have found), and all because a wild lad, who since became a famous poet, is said to have made free with Mr. Lucy's remote ancestors' deer. A doubtful story to say the least of it, for Charlecote had no deer then! At the same time it is a patent fact, that Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Lucy did fall out about some matter, trivial or otherwise, and the bard afterwards revenged himself by some verses ridiculing the offended knight, and also later in life in the first scene in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor.' In the rural church of Charlecote is a fine marble altar-tomb, with recumbent effigies of the aforesaid knight and his lady, carved in the finest alabaster, the man being in full armour. Above the tomb is inscribed the epitaph, written by Sir Thomas Lucy of his wife, honourable to the living composer and to the beloved dead. It is a long inscription paying a tribute to a woman's worth, such as no Justice Shallow could possibly compose. After recounting her many virtues and her great goodness—English women of those days, as now, seem to have made the best of wives—it ends thus: '. . . . When all is spoken that can be said, a woman so furnished and garnished with virtue is not to be bettered, and hardly to be excelled by any. As she

lived most virtuously, so she died most godly. Set down by him who best did know what hath been written to be true, Thomas Lucy.' None but a kindly man, possessing a warm heart and a noble nature, could have written thus. Shakespeare has been unjust to Sir Thomas Lucy in this matter, and after reading the above epitaph, I must confess I am all with the worthy knight. There is no reason because Shakespeare turned out in after life to be a great poet, he may not in his youth have been a wild scapegrace, nay, most probably he was; great men are not made of putty. But this is no cause why justice should not be done to the memory of a worthy, brave, and loyal man.

Having finished our pilgrimage, we proceeded on our way to Warwick, through a most lovely country beautiful beyond a mere pen-and-ink description. The day too and hour were perfect, the slanting sun sent welcome shadows across our way. The portion of Warwickshire through which we were now travelling is a pleasant undulating country, rich with bright green meadows, timbered parks in which the deer abound, and from out amidst the foliage of which peep here and there the gable-ends and stacks of chimneys of some quaint old mansion. Fine old half-timbered farm-houses are plentiful with cottages to match, from which the blue smoke curls peacefully and lazily upwards. It was a delightful prospect, and the occasional spire of some old country church piercing the sky line gave a character to the whole. Each turn of the road brought to us some new beauty, and we were sorry when our stage was over. The

road over which we had passed must have been often trod by Shakespeare when a lad, if like other lads he was of rambling propensities, which doubtless he was, and afterwards when a man. The country about must have been well known to him, and we saw it probably much as he saw it, its *contour* is the same; many of the old houses, fields, and trees, probably presented much the same appearance to him they did to us.

The town of Warwick pleased and disappointed us; in some respects it exceeded our best expectations, in others it fell far short of them—an enigma solvable by the fact that the old town was destroyed by fire in 1694, and the comparatively and eminently respectable modern buildings are not picturesque and have no flavour of antiquity, nor do they possess any of that charming mellowness, the gift alone of age. The principal street has a clean, thrifty, modern every-day look; the architecture is simple and unsuggestive, whereas we had expected a quaint old place, with many peaked gables and old-time houses. But still much of the old remains, and that so good that it more than recompensed us for any disappointment in the chief part of the town. We approached and left Warwick romantically enough: we entered the town under a church, built over one of the great stone gateways, that once formed the entrance to the place, it having evidently in times past been surrounded by fortified walls, and we departed under another church in a like manner. I know of no other town in the world with such a peculiar conglomeration of buildings. To us it seemed passing strange

to drive right under a church, having above us its sepulchred dead and the memorials of the departed great, all supported overhead upon a tunnel of massive masonry.

Of all the ancient buildings of Warwick, its famous castle excepted, what pleased us most was Leicester's Hospital. It is a finely-designed and a well-executed and preserved structure of timber and plaster, with high-pitched gables, curiously twisted chimneys, richly carved oak-beams, and projecting windows and eaves. Originally this fine pile belonged to a religious foundation, but upon the dissolution of these establishments it came into the possession, honestly or otherwise, of Robert Dudley, the famous Earl of Leicester. It does not do to enquire too closely how great men came into property in those days ; the said earl founded here a hospital for twelve old citizens, possibly to atone for his many sins. The inmates are known by the term brethren, and have to wear a long blue gown or cloak, bearing upon the same a badge of Leicester's well-known device or crest—the bear and ragged staff. It is interesting to know that these badges now worn (not the cloaks of course) are the very same ones that were doffed by the first brethren over three hundred years ago, so well and carefully have they been preserved. Inside as well as out the building is perfect ; it is rich with dark carved oak-beams, settles, chairs, ample fireplaces, and pleasant bay-windows with many lattice panes. Such interiors are the delight of artists, and the envy of modern architects, I might almost add their despair, for by

some strange fatality they seem never to be able to reproduce such harmonious wholes. If they do attempt anything of the kind, either the interior or the exterior suffers, and they have certainly never invented anything better or half as good. Possibly in all broad England there are not a dozen other such quaintly picturesque buildings remaining. The land was covered with them at one time, but fires, and the ruthless hand of our ancestors in the dark ages of art have, alas! swept them all away. Some still remain to us: Speke Hall, in Lancashire—perhaps the finest old half-timbered building ever erected—Levens, Knole, and Hardwick Halls, and a few others, to be counted on one's fingers, alone are able to compare in picturesque beauty with the hospital founded by Leicester. Would we had some of those old builders now. A well-known American writer has said: 'England has never produced great architects.' He must mean modern England; and she is no worse off possibly than her neighbours. Our noble cathedrals—on the whole the finest Gothic buildings in Christendom—our ruined abbeys, our grand old feudal castles, our stately old halls and palaces, prove beyond cavil what great men were our architects of old. We next visited the ancient church of St. Mary's, leaving Warwick Castle for the next morning, as it was too late to see it that day. We were obliged, therefore, for the nonce to put the cart before the horse, and see the last resting-place of the Earls of Warwick before their magnificent fortress home. This noble structure (the church) suffered severely from the fire of 1694, and

was restored at an unfortunate period; happily, however, the choir, the splendid chancel, and the rare Lady Chapel escaped the destroying flames. The less said about the restoration the better: distance lends enchantment to the view in their case. I heartily wish half the restorers, so-called (destroyers is a more correct title for them), had been at the bottom of the sea before they laid their self-sufficient, conceited, incompetent hands on our grand old edifices, religious and otherwise, for time has wrought far less havoc than they. In the choir is a splendid altar-tomb, said to be the most beautiful in the kingdom, upon which rest the effigies of Thomas Beauchamp, the first Earl of Warwick, and the founder of his family, all clad in armour, and by his side his Countess, Catherine Mortimer. One hand of the brave warrior rests upon his sword, the other affectionately clasps that of his wife. A touching memento of a great and noble man, as faithful and tender in love as he was bold and brave in war. By their heads are two female figures, as though silently keeping watch and ward over the sculptured dead. At the earl's feet is a bear; at his wife's is a lamb. This fearless warrior fought valiantly by the side of the lion-hearted Prince of Wales both at Crecy and Poictiers, and afterwards his sword did good service against the infidels in Palestine. This most worthy noble died in Calais, greatly lamented:

The knight is dust,
His good sword rust,
His soul is with the Saints we trust.

We next visited the 'Matchless Lady,' or

Beauchamp chapel, as it is more frequently called, descending into the same by a flight of stairs. This addition to the church was finished in 1464. It was built as directed by the will of Richard Beauchamp, and is a perfect specimen of pure Gothic work: there could be nothing finer. Here in the centre is his gorgeous tomb. His recumbent figure lies upon a splendid sarcophagus: it is of bronze richly gilt, and represents him in a full suit of armour. His head is bare and rests upon his empty casque; his hands are uplifted as in prayer. An inscription in quaint old-lettered and worded English, somewhat difficult to decipher, runs round the top of the tomb. By it we are told that his body 'was broght to Warrewik, the iiii day of October the yer abouesaide (AMCCCxxxix), and was leide with ful Solenne exequies in a feir chest made of Stane, in this Chirche afore the West dore of this chapel, according to his last Wille and Testament, therein to rest.' The spelling of the words is enough to drive a modern scholar frantic. I have only given but a brief extract of the long legend, and that the easiest to be read; much of it we could neither read nor understand. Such words as the following which occur, are not very readily translated into modern English: fulfeire, vout, cristenley, ffraunce, thewhuch, rooche. It is said that about the year 1650, by some accident the vault fell in, and the stone coffin was disclosed, the lid being broken. The body was found to be in perfect condition, but quickly fell to dust on being exposed to the air. There are several other fine tombs in the chapel;

the most interesting one is that of Robert Dudley, the famous Earl of Leicester, and the favourite of Queen Elizabeth. It is, indeed, a stately monument: magnificent in life, he is sumptuously surrounded in death; the earl is shown in armour, with the orders of the Garter and St. Michael. He died on the 4th of September from poison, which he is said to have prepared for others and to have taken by mistake. An inscription in Latin runs round his tomb, enumerating his many virtues—virtues, by the way, all unknown to history. In the chapel too, is an interesting old coffer, much worm-eaten and decayed, and bound with iron; an ancient carved oak chair, doubtless possessing an eventful history, could we but have found it out; a rude lectern of Elizabeth's time; and, above all, what claimed our special attention, three old casques, one of which was worn by the Marquis of Northampton in the time of Henry VIII., and still retains the crest, a swan with wings expanded.

Before leaving the church it may not be out of place, as I have given some before, to select out of a long list a few of the many relics possessed by the same in its palmy days, when from afar devout Catholics made long pilgrimages hither. Here, then, is a condensed list:

Part of the manger in which Christ was laid,
Part of the sheet in which His body was wrapped,
Some of the hair of the Virgin Mary,
A portion of the burning bush of Moses,
A piece of Abraham's chair,
A piece of the true cross,
And many other wonderful items.

It is to be observed that St. Mary's of Warwick

possessed a portion of the *true* cross. Were other pieces of the cross shown in other churches not, then, genuine, or why did they proclaim theirs to be of the veritable wood? There must surely have been a competition of relics in those days. It is well known that several churches possessed the very lance used by the Roman soldier that pierced our Lord's side. This multiplication of the same relic was not managed well. But at that time the spirit of enquiry and doubt was in its infancy.

In the coffee-room of our hotel we found two parties of American ladies—one of two, another of three—all travelling by themselves and without a male escort. But they appear to have managed well, surprisingly well: they had seen nearly the whole of Europe in six weeks (not bad work that!), and were devoting their seventh and last to England. They were deliberately discussing how many cities, cathedrals, abbeys, castles, sights, &c., &c., they could manage in that time. Bradshaw was in great request. Six days to see England in!—they literally made my head swim. Why, for several years past, I had devoted a great portion of my life to travelling about in England, and I did not consider I had a half or a quarter seen it yet. Surely our American cousins are a wonderful people—'John Bull isn't in it,' as they say. However, we spent a very pleasant evening with them, and I endeavoured to assist them in selecting a route, but failed. They wanted to see so many cathedrals (named), castles, &c., in the time, besides taking a peep at Wales and Scotland, and a run through the Lake district and Dartmoor and a bit of Devonshire, that, even with the aid of Bradshaw

and the fastest express trains, I came utterly to grief and gave the job up. I could not even get all the cathedrals in they wished in the time, so I was of no use, and I believe they unanimously, amongst themselves, voted me a regular duffer.

The next morning, early, we visited the castle, not so early, however, but that we found our American friends of the previous evening before us. In fact, they had seen everything (so they told us), and as we wished them good-bye and a pleasant journey, we heard them instructing a hired coachman to drive on as fast as he could to Kenilworth, as they wanted to catch the twelve something train to Worcester. I wonder what they thought of our method of travelling.

Warwick Castle is a perfect storehouse of treasures. The approach to it is singularly romantic, being along a winding road hewn out of the solid rock, emerging from which we had a most effective and imposing view of the castle, the two lofty and massive towers, called, respectively, the Cæsar's and Guy's Towers, being most conspicuous. We entered the building by the great baronial hall, which has been restored, after the fire which played great havoc with the old one, on the same plan. It has, of course, an unavoidably and a regrettably new look. Much of the armour, too, was damaged, but it has been reground and now shows but few signs of the misfortune. The hall is an exceedingly fine one and well-proportioned, being over 60 feet long, by 40 feet wide, and nearly the same height. The collection of armour that decorates the walls of the same is most interesting ; and conspicuous among the

many curiosities here displayed were the relics of the famous Guy of Warwick. His porridge-pot is shown—a huge vessel calculated to contain over a hundred gallons. It is made of bell-metal, and resounded with a deafening noise when struck by a hammer. The guide informed us it was used as a punchbowl on the coming of age of the present Earl, and that to fill it 12 bottles of brandy, 12 of rum, and 12 of gin, 20 lbs. of sugar, numerous lemons, and other ingredients in like proportion were used. She said that there were a hundred guests in the house at the time, and that it was emptied three times, by which we concluded the visitors on that eventful occasion must have had a very jolly time, and one quite in keeping with the old days. Besides the capacious porridge-pot, we were shown his fork, about the size of a pitchfork ; his casque or helmet, weighing over 7 lbs. ; his formidable sword of 20 lbs. ; his breastplate of 52 lbs., by all of which we concluded he must indeed have been a giant, and by no means a pleasant foe to meet. There is, too, shown the rib of the historic wild bull he killed on Dunsmoor Heath. From the window of the hall is a beautiful view of the surrounding country, and right under the castle walls is seen a cascade of the river, a busy waterwheel, and a picturesque old ruined bridge, all together completing a most perfect picture. It would require more than a whole chapter were I to enumerate even half the treasures we saw in this grand old feudal pile. We noticed, in the state bedroom, Queen Anne's portmanteau or travelling-chest, and were struck by its very moderate dimensions. What would the modern fashionable lady say to it, I

wonder? In the grounds we stopped to admire the stately old cedars, planted by the Crusaders on the eve of their departure from here to Palestine, and in a greenhouse we saw the famous Warwick Vase. This specimen of ancient Grecian or Roman handicraft was, the gardener informed us, discovered in 1774, buried in the mud at the bottom of a lake adjoining the Emperor Hadrian's palace at Tivoli, in Italy. It was purchased by the then English ambassador at Naples, from whom it was bought by the present Earl's grandfather. It is, of course, heresy to say anything but in praise of 'this most magnificent and hunequalled work of hancient hart,' as the guide termed it, but, frankly, we were much disappointed, and failed to see, save by its size, any special merit in it, either of design or execution. Of course everybody, guide-books and all, exclaim at the wonderful beauty of this unexampled piece of antique sculpture, but, in spite of all their praise, we could not see it, and so held stubbornly to our own opinion, in which, perhaps, we proved what a bigoted being John Bull can be when he chooses. We could not help thinking, however, that it would be well if people would have the courage to maintain their own ideas on different subjects, and not follow, parrot-like, the sayings and opinions of others. You may make excellent copies of art-work by being led, but you will never originate or create anything worthy or great by so doing.

Of the castle itself much might be written. A stronghold existed here as early as the year 915, and is supposed to have been erected by Ethelfleda, daughter of Alfred the Great. At the time of the

Conquest, Henry de Newburgh, one of William's followers, was created by him the first Earl of Warwick, and the old Saxon castle given to him, with instructions to strengthen the fortifications. Thomas de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick in the reign of Edward III., greatly added to and strengthened the place. After him his son built the famous Guy's Tower in the year 1394. It may be interesting to know that this grand piece of work cost, in those days, the very moderate sum of 325*l.* 5*s.* Cæsar's Tower, with its machicolated battlements, is a grand object. Tradition says it was erected by Julius Cæsar, but evidently, in this respect, tradition cannot be relied upon. It is probably, nay, certainly, of a much later date. During the reign of James the First, Dugdale remarks of Warwick Castle that 'it was not only a place of great strength, but extraordinary delight; with most pleasant gardens, walks, and thickets, such as even this part of England can hardly parallel, so that now it is the most princely seat that is within the midland parts of this realm.'

Beneath both Guy's and Cæsar's Towers are gloomy dungeons, the walls of which possess a melancholy interest by reason of the numerous inscriptions, strange devices, names, sentences, letters, &c., thereon, many of which are cut in relief, evidently the work of the unfortunate wretches who have been captives here. To have been a prisoner of war in those days must have been a dreadful experience. Once securely immured here, few of the miserable creatures, if any, ever left the walls alive. Death were preferable to such a captivity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Sunshine and Shower—Country Perfumes—The Prettiest Road in England—Guy's Cliff—A Romantic Hermit—Kenilworth—Queen Elizabeth's Visit—Footpaths—Coventry—A Quaint Old Town—Coventry Cross—The Legend of Godiva—Peeping Tom—Ancient Churches—A Curious Inscription—The Old City Walls—An Act of Vandalism—An Interesting Stage—Coombe Abbey—The Queen of Bohemia—Rugby and its School.

THE present generation, who live so much in towns, miss many of the natural beauties that exist in the country. A man walking along Piccadilly or Oxford Street, seldom notices the magnificent sunsets that are even in cities to be seen; in the country he could not fail to observe their beauties. So with a summer shower, it simply causes a Londoner to hastily seek for shelter. In the country, a sudden burst of rain, the sun shining afar off—how shall I describe it? It is, as it were, a shower of opals, a most lovely sight, and the leaves of the trees are all sparkling drops of crystals, rubies, topazes, and pearls, at least to those who have eyes to see.

Ruskin, speaking of a painting of Turner's in a private collection, representing a summer day of sunshine and shower, said the painter had dipped his brush in opals. Those who have really studied the wonderful beauties nature so bountifully scatters around, will understand the truth of this remark.

Then, too, country sounds are wonderfully soothing and delightful; what can be more pleasing than the joyous singing of our wild birds—the lark making the air quiver with his song, the fluting of the blackbird, the clear sweet song of the thrush, the marvellous notes of the nightingale, are enough to send a deep thrill of exultation through the heart of the listener. Nothing in travelling through some of the finest scenery in America, and in traversing the wild Californian forests, impressed me more than the absence of the songs of birds; there was a joyless silence in the air that oppressed me. It was not for some time that I discovered the reason, and then I appreciated, as I never did before, our own humble and neglected feathered songsters. Some one somewhere says, speaking of America—who or where I cannot recollect just now, but he must certainly have been an Englishman—that he could not live in a country without old timbered houses: I would rather say I could not live in a country where the birds are songless. Then, again, the various perfumes borne on the country air are not to be forgotten. What can be more delightful than driving past a field of new-mown hay? A beanfield in flower, too, has a scent to me particularly delicious and fragrant. Fresh sweet odours are wafted from all around, it may be from lime-trees in flower, from a bush of wild rose-trees or sweet briar, or from a patch of wild thyme or lavender, or from a field of fragrant clover, or a hundred other flowers, shrubs and trees, that grow wild in this England of ours. What, too, can compare with a whiff of honeysuckle that grows so

luxuriantly in our hedges? it is of all the perfumes so generously wafted around, perhaps the sweetest. Driving along we seldom could resist plucking a sprig of this deliciously scented flower. In fact, we had generally a bouquet of wild flowers always with us, and very beautiful they were; we would not have changed them for the most delicious garden flowers that the world could offer us.

From Warwick we drove to the ancient city of Coventry, halting at Kenilworth half-way to inspect the hoary old ruins of the famous castle there—a theme in stone from which Sir Walter Scott wrote a novel. There is a well-known anecdote of two famous travellers of a generation ago, when travelling by road was more common than it is now-a-days, who, meeting at dinner, were asked by the company each to write down what he considered the prettiest road in England. One wrote down the road from Coventry to Warwick, the other from Warwick to Coventry! And a beautiful road it certainly is, but to call it the most so of any in England is a libel upon the thousands of miles of lovely country highways and lanes. Shortly after leaving Warwick we passed the fine old avenue of magnificent cedar-trees, leading to the famous Guy's Cliff, a romantic residence rarely to be equalled, and not anywhere to be excelled, situated as it is in the very heart of sunny England—for the sun does shine in England, and shine brightly, too, let envious critics say what they will! It was to this secluded and then unknown spot that Guy of Warwick betook himself, in a spirit of remorse for all the blood he had shed

and the mischief he had made. Here with his own hands he hewed himself a cave in which he lived a hermit's life, according to the old tradition :

> There with my hands I scooped a house
> Out of a craggy rock of stone ;
> And livëd like a palmer poor,
> Within that cave myself, alone.

A certain fair noble lady used to give alms to the lonely hermit, and to seek saintly counsel from him. This worthy dame was in reality no other than Guy's wife, who believed her husband to be a captive in Palestine, or to have been killed there. When dying, Guy revealed himself to her: she, still full of affection for him, nursed and tended him. She lived not long after her husband, and they were buried in the same grave.

We approached the castle and village of Kenilworth over a picturesque ford, through which the horses dashed gallantly, and from which we had a most perfect view—the best to be had—of the ruins. We put up at a little old-fashioned inn opposite the castle gates, and proceeded at once to inspect the historic pile. We were allowed to wander guideless, for which we were thankful; but though guideless, our rambles were not aimless. We traced where of old was the keep, the banqueting hall, the tiltyard, the stables, the pleasance, the kitchens, the gardens, and the dungeons. A palace, a fortress, and a prison—what contrasts! We endeavoured, not very successfully perhaps, but we did our best to picture the place as it was in its supreme glory, when good Queen Bess, of splendid memory, visited the great

and renowned Earl of Leicester here—a visit Scott has immortalised. The Virgin Queen stayed here seventeen days, the whole of which was a gorgeous pageant; this entertainment must have cost the earl an enormous sum. Robert Laneham states, as a proof of the unbounded hospitality of that time, that the hands of the time-pieces were tied to the hour of two o'clock, the appointed hour of banquet. Then Shakespeare was a lad of some twelve or fourteen years of age, and as all the country round gathered to see the Queen and the sports, he doubtless, too, was here. This magnificent and unequalled pile was given by Cromwell to certain of his favourites, who for the bare value of the materials demolished the place, and left it what it now is—a superb ruin, the grandeur of which attests its former greatness. Surely, such Goths were never seen before or since. Ivy, that ruin-loving creeper, now covers the stern old walls, which both protects and hastens their decay. It was a perfect day we had on which to see the hoary old castle, so renowned in history and story; the sunshine rested lovingly upon the ruined pile, and a perfect day in England is as perfect a thing as the world can produce. We felt we stood here on hallowed, haunted ground, and we were loth to leave so romantic and historic a spot. How silent and deserted now are all thy halls and courts, O princely Kenilworth! Thy walls have witnessed many a glorious pageantry, have echoed the mirth of many a merry festival; within have dwelt the greatest and noblest of the land—and now, the timid sheep alone inhabit them! How great the

contrast! Thy moat and lakes are filled and dried up, thy stately walls are in ruins, thy pride—where is that!

We had a grand drive on to Coventry in the refreshing cool of the evening. The road nearly the whole way is along a stately avenue of sheltering trees, beyond which we caught glorious peeps of expansive commons and wild free-heaths, and anon we had picturesque glimpses of reapers, all busily at work among the golden cornfields. The setting sun sent long dreamy shadows of the bordering trees across our lonely road, for, save an occasional startled rabbit, we had it all to ourselves. It was a lovely drive, and one long to be remembered. Here and there we noticed frequent stiles, giving access to pleasant-looking footpaths, sacred alone to pedestrians. Wandering away to the right and left of us went the paths, across green fields, and by wooded parks, and along the sides of meandering streams, leading to peaceful hamlets, old farm-houses, quaint old halls, and many quiet, restful nooks and picturesque spots. These footpaths are probably the oldest rights of road in England, and are full of interest to the rambler. How tempting they appeared to us! Had it not been eventide we should have taken our chance of the first one we came to, and have leisurely (you somehow cannot hurry on a footpath, even if you would) sauntered along its delightful and inviting way. These old world by-ways take one right away out of the busy every-day world, and give the wayfarer an insight into the very

heart of rural country life—the rural country life of Old England, and what can compare with that?

Presently the three tall spires of Coventry came into sight, piercing the air, and towering grandly over the town. They told out a dark transparent silver grey against the luminous sunset sky. Such glorious effects of colour are common enough in England for those who will but notice them; nature paints as gorgeous scenes in Britain as she does in distant Italy. Soon after sighting the famous spires we found ourselves rattling merrily along the not-too-straight streets of that ancient and picturesque city, in which we found an hotel as old-fashioned as the place—an hotel with high four-poster beds and carved mantels, oaken floors and mullioned windows, and all to match. Unfortunately—oh, why is there always a fly in our ointment?—the stables were old-fashioned too, and not quite as clean or comfortable for our steeds as we could have wished. If the more modern portion of Warwick disappointed us, Coventry more than made up for any former disenchantment of ours. The quaintness of the old town exceeded even our greatest expectations. The many projecting timber-framed houses with their light pitched gables, curious carvings, and many-quarrelled windows, make an architectural group not to be seen every day, or often in a life-time. And besides the private buildings the public edifices are full of interest, and are remarkable for their magnificence, antiquity, and strange traditions and legends connected with them. Coventry is, without doubt, a glorious old city, and years ago must have

been more glorious still, before the hand of the despoiler, and the march of modern improvements, destroyed so much that was beautiful. It is hardly to be credited, but it is, alas! a lamentable fact, that the benighted and unworthy citizens of this place, in the year 1717, pulled down a most unique architectural monument, known by the name of Coventry Cross, and famous throughout England as being the most magnificent of its kind anywhere to be found. It was erected by Sir William Hollies, the then Lord Mayor of London, in the year 1544, to the memory of his father, who lived near here. It was hexagonal in shape, of Gothic design, and sixty feet in height; its many pillars, arches, finals, pinnacles, and tracery were of exquisite workmanship and finish, and the numerous recesses and niches were filled with carefully executed statues of English saints, kings, and warriors. In 1670, or thereabouts, it was thoroughly repaired, regilded and redecorated, but in less than fifty years after, the degenerate and tasteless descendants of those who laboured so diligently to beautify their city, ruthlessly removed this fine memorial of the olden times, rather than expend the sum necessary to restore it! Such beings ought to have lived in the backwoods of America or in Central Africa, where they would have been out of harm's way.

The next morning after our arrival we started upon our usual tour of inspection. We noticed more than one Peeping-Tom rudely carved on the beams or plaster of the houses, and in one place he is represented in an effigy in a purposely built recess in

a corner of a building. The legend of Godiva so intimately associated with Coventry is well known; but it will bear repetition, especially when related in the quaint language of the famous antiquarian and historian, Sir William Dugdale, who lived 1605 to 1685. These then are his words: 'The Countess Godiva having herself an extraordinary affection for the place, often and earnestly besought her lord that, for the love of God and the Blessed Virgin, he would free it from that grievous tax whereunto it was subject; but he, rebuking her for importuning him in a manner so inconsistent with his profit, commanded that she should thenceforth forbear to move therein; yet she, out of her womanish pertinacity, continued to solicit him, insomuch that he told her scornfully if she would ride naked through the town he would repeal it. Whereunto she returned: "But will you give me leave?" And he, nodding assent, the noble lady, upon an appointed day, got on horseback naked, with her hair loose, so that it covered all her body but her feet, and thus she rode forth. She returned with joy to her husband, who thereupon granted to the inhabitants a charter of freedom. In memory whereof a picture of him and his said lady was set up in a south window of Trinity Church in this city in Richard the Second's time, his right hand holding a charter, with these words written thereon:

"I, Luriche, for Love of thee
Doe make Coventree Toll-free."'

Tradition states that all the inhabitants on the eventful day withdrew from the streets and windows, but,

'one low churl,' a tailor, bored an auger-hole through which he endeavoured to peep, but was instantly struck blind; hence originated 'Peeping Tom,' the despised of Coventry. We first visited St. Mary's Hall, a grand building, exceedingly well preserved, and a perfect specimen of ancient architecture of the period. It was erected prior to 1450, and formed portion of a religious foundation. At the dissolution it was lost to the Church, and now is used for city purposes. The great hall is 80 feet long by 30 broad and about 35 in height. It has a boldly and richly carved oak roof, and at the south end is a minstrel's gallery; at the other is a magnificent window of elaborate stone tracery, and filled in with rare old stained glass. Beneath this, stretched upon the walls, is a fine specimen of old tapestry in very fair condition. Here, too, are numerous oil-paintings of doubtful merit of various kings and queens of England; and what is of more interest, some genuine old armour long in the possession of the city, and which used to be, and may now, for all I know, be used in the Godiva procession.

The old churches of Coventry are many, and all are exceptionally fine; the stone used in their construction has unfortunately proved to be of a very friable nature, and is much weathered and decayed, giving them a look of greater age than is even really theirs. St. Michael's is the largest and the most beautiful, if it is fair to make comparisons where all are so good. Mr. Brewer observes of it 'that it is of the best Gothic, light though august, and impressive.' Sir Christopher Wren, also, pronounced it 'a

masterpiece of art'; but he was so wedded to the stiff uncompromising classical work that his opinion (though in this case a correct one) is not worth much. How little he felt or understood the beauties of Gothic architecture is evident by the mean towers he added to Westminster Abbey: the old monks work and Wren's contemptible imitation of the same. Oh! the difference. It is said to be the largest parish church in England, originally built as such, and this statement is probably correct; the roof is of dark ribbed oak curiously carved. The church and tower were built by two notable citizens, in their day, Adam and William Bontoner, two brothers, who were in turns for many years Mayors of Coventry, their sisters completing and adding to the structure after their death. An old brass plate which used to be on the chancel walls, and should by right be there now, relates how :—

William and Adam built the Tower,
Ann and Mary built the Spire;
William and Adam built the Church,
Ann and Mary built the Quire.

In this church history records Henry VI. heard mass, so it must have been completed in his reign.

The greatest loss Coventry ever suffered at the hands of the destroyer was the laying waste of its famous city walls and towers. Cromwell and his satellites have received from me their full share of blame; let me now be just and impartial, and put down to the opposite side the responsibility for this gross and needless act of Vandalism. The walls of this city were, without doubt, the finest in England; they were

over three miles in circumference, of immense thickness and strength, and had over thirty machicolated towers and numerous gates—the whole being of great architectural merit, beauty being happily combined with solidity. They had taken many years to complete, having been begun in 1350, and not finally completed till fifty years later. At the time of the Civil Wars they were in perfect repair. Charles II. spitefully ordered these to be razed to the ground because Coventry had declared for the Commonwealth. It took over 500 men for many weeks to complete this deplorable work of destruction.

We could easily, profitably, and pleasantly have spent some days at Coventry; but 'madam' would not; she said she was tired of the place, it was a slow, stupid town, and on to Rugby that afternoon she insisted upon going. All argument was useless, her mind was made up and she would not be gainsayed. Coventry was a wretched old place, she said, nothing but a collection of antiquated buildings and crooked streets, and she was quite wearied of it. This was quite a new and unexpected phase of mind; hitherto no praise had been too great for the antique, no condemnation too strong for all that was modern; but the cause of the wonderful apparent change was not far to seek. Was not her 'wee treasure' at Rugby, only a few hours' drive, and a mother's heart could not restrain itself any longer? And so that afternoon we left the old-world city of Coventry, half unseen, for the more modern—and on this occasion only—the more attractive town of Rugby. You can hardly drive anywhere a dozen miles over English ground without passing by some historic mansion or

hallowed haunted spot. Surely no country in the world possesses so much of interest in so small a space; no other land is so redolent of human occupancy, and having withal such a reposeful home-like look, and so we found it on this day's journey. We came across, on our short stage of twelve miles or so, many spots of interest, historical and otherwise: here a battle was fought; there existed in the dim, far-off olden time a rich Cistercian abbey; yonder stands, proudly still, the ruins of an old feudal stronghold with a world of history and romance of its own. Again we traversed a lonely heath, famous in the old coaching days for the daring highwayman; then quaint old churches, ancient manor-houses and peaceful villages met our charmed gaze, and so on in endless succession. Surely a few miles of such a country is worth a whole territory of new western lands. The chief object of interest among the many on our road to-day was Coombe Abbey, which we passed about half-way to Rugby. This grand old mansion built upon the site of a still more ancient religious edifice, approached by a magnificent avenue of trees through a finely wooded park, is a most perfect specimen of one of the 'stately homes of England.' It has been in possession of the Earls of Craven for generations back, one of whom was noted for his romantic devotion to Elizabeth the unfortunate daughter of James I., and ex-queen of Bohemia. On her flight to England from her dominions, a widow, the then Earl gave her this mansion for a residence. The queen's pride was as great as her beauty; it was the former that caused all her husband's troubles.

When he, then the Elector Palatine, was offered the uneasy crown of Bohemia and hesitated to accept it, it was she who scornfully said, she 'would rather eat dry bread at a king's table than feast at the board of an elector.' Her beauty (she was known by the name of the Queen of Hearts amongst her devoted followers), and her ready wit, possibly her misfortunes also, it would seem she inherited from her grandmother, Mary of Scotland.

We travelled well, not to say rapidly, but 'madam' would have it the horses had never trotted so slowly before. Another time the road would have appeared only too short, now to her the way seemed endless, but all things come to an end in this world, and so Rugby was duly reached by the evening, and the mother's heart was made glad by the sight of her pet. Rugby struck us as being a new-looking old town, a strange contradiction of terms, but no other combination of words will express my meaning so well. Brevity is the soul of description as well as of wit. The chief object of interest here is the famous school, amongst the head masters of which was the renowned Dr. Arnold. This great public institution was founded in 1567 by one Laurence Sherif, a wealthy grocer of the city of London, and a native of this place. It is a fine structure in the comfortable-looking Elizabethan style; here was placed the scene of 'Tom Brown's School Days.'

'Madam' pretended to find Rugby a most interesting town, and insisted upon remaining there for a couple of days at least; it was easy to see wherein her interest lay.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Misleading Signpost—Guides—A Rolling Country—Strange Signboards—Northampton Town and People—The Old Coaching Days—Times Past and Present—A Large Courtyard—Queen Eleanor's Cross—Horton—A Vanished Inn—We Camp Out—Newport Pagnell—Bric-à-Brac Hunting—We Secure a Bargain—An Ancient Chimney-piece—Curious Inscription—Woburn Abbey—Hockliffe—A Race for Shelter—The Great North Road—Dunstable—Our Quarters at the Sugar-Loaf—The British Farmer—A Wet Day and Drive—St. Albans—Inn Full—Home Again.

A BRIGHT sunny morning induced us to make an early start, and once more we found ourselves on the road, journeying southwards and homewards. A few miles on our way we were astonished at coming across a signpost with 'To Northampton' on it, pointing to the right, and as it was to Northampton we were going, we were somewhat puzzled at the fact, as straight on appeared to us should be our road. A halt was therefore called, our maps and Patterson consulted, and both agreed that straight forward was our way, and events proved they were right and the signpost wrong, which shows guides, in this world, of which there are many and of all kinds, are not always to be implicitly trusted, and that it is also necessary, at times, to estimate as correctly as possible the true value and worth, and infallibility, if you will, of our guide. Thus, really, in religious, political, artistic, and other matters, important or otherwise, we have practically to rely

solely on ourselves. Even if we select some one to direct us, and are willing to be led by him, still we are governed by our own judgment as to the ability and qualifications of our guide.

It was a fine rolling country through which we passed. At one time we found ourselves on high ground, our elevated position affording us glorious views around. Then we descended into a valley where the raised roadsides hid all prospects from us, and on which the entangled roots of the trees formed a complete network, as did their branches overhead. And so on our road continued the whole of the way, alternately ascending and descending, and the brake was constantly in requisition. The road was certainly not a triumph of engineering skill. Many of the gradients might, with a little trouble, by filling in in places, and by cutting through the crests of the various rises, have been made much easier, and we wondered much why such simple improvements had never been carried out. But, for ourselves, we were glad they had not been made, for the cuttings would have caused us the loss of many a pleasant view and extensive prospect. Besides, we were in no hurry, and a hilly road is nearly always an attractive one. And why should we hurry? Were we not on pleasure bent, and was not time made for slaves? The horses, to whom views and glimpses of a pretty country were of no concern, would doubtless have preferred a more even way, but they trotted contentedly and quietly along, bothering their heads as little about scenery 'as a lover does of constancy, or an advocate of truth.'

We passed one or two lonely wayside public-houses (we marvelled to see any), the signs of which were very quaint and amused us much. One, especially, we noticed: it represented two men scrubbing a negro in a tub, and bore, above, the curious legend, 'The Labour in Vain.' However did such originate was to us a matter of wonder!

Northampton we found to be a most disagreeable town to drive into. Tramways and tramcars, at which the horses shied, not having been used, for so long a time, to such products of modern civilisation. Narrow, crooked roads and crowded thoroughfares, did not tend to make it an easy task to steer a clear course, and, to add to our difficulties, the worthy inhabitants of the place appeared to prefer to walk on the roads to using the footpaths. In this respect they were better off than ourselves, for whilst they could walk along the streets, we could not drive on the footway. We alighted here at quite an imposing-looking hotel, evidently one of the last century, the courtyard of which we found to be surrounded by a wilderness of stabling, and in which a whole regiment of cavalry could easily have been stowed away, so vast were they. Nothing impresses me more with the glory of the old coaching days than these enormous and ample inn-yards. In the present year of grace and railways, the extensive stabling accommodation was naturally far too great for the modern modest requirements of the hotel. A station omnibus, an odd horse or two for posting and other incidental work, a few stalls and carriage-room to accommodate commercial and other chance travellers

by road—now few and far between, and growing, we were told, still fewer as the years roll on and iron roads multiply—are all that now is wanted. One cannot help feeling, somehow—unreasonably, perhaps—a regretful longing for the past, when viewing thus some of the glories of its departed greatness. We endeavoured to picture our hotel as it was in the heyday of its prosperity, when mine host—a sturdy being, doubtless, and a good sample of the cheer that might be expected within—stood at the wide open inn door to welcome his guests, continually arriving and departing all day long—and night too, for that matter—and who alighted here from the gay mail coaches, whose cheery horn gave due notice of their arrival and starting. We pictured, too, the many travellers posting along, and the knot of admiring stable-boys, ostlers, and other idlers who always gathered around each fresh arrival. Still, were the so-called good old times to come back to us once more, I doubt not but that we should be terribly discontented; for, like as age mellows and gives a certain soft, hallowed beauty to an old ruin, which, when new, it could never possess, so time has, as it always does, covered with a glamour of romance the days gone by, which now we call the good old times. We hear, as a rule, only of the pleasures, and see alone the bright side of the past, while, to compare with these, we have the living realities of the present.

But to return to the courtyard of our inn. As I have said before, the spacious and extensive stabling was far too vast for the present requirements of the

hotel. Consequently, the stables were let off to various tradesmen, carriers, and other parties in the town. This was unfortunate, as everybody appeared to have a right there, and quite a crowd gathered round our man whilst he was washing the carriage. They evidently looked upon him as a sort of hero when they learnt he had been travelling by road for three months all through England and Wales. Doubtless he enlarged upon his wanderings, and related wonderful stories of our journey. But for all that they managed to steal—appropriate is perhaps a pleasanter word to use—his carriage sponge and one of our umbrellas from the phaeton. There were evidently some dishonest people in Northampton. In the evening we attempted a ramble round the town, but we found the footpaths so crowded with rough men, some of whom were not too sober, that it was unpleasant walking with a lady, and after a short stroll we were glad to regain our comfortable inn. We had, however, the consolation of remembering that an English bishop once said 'he would rather see England drunk and free than sober and enslaved.' Were it possible, we would prefer to see England both free and sober. We left Northampton early next morning. It struck us as being a fine old town, with some beautiful old churches—judging by their outside appearance, for we did not inspect them internally—and I doubt not they would well repay a visit. In fine, we vastly preferred the place to the inhabitants; but that may be owing to our want of taste, and possibly, by some unlucky accident, we may have seen Northampton under unfavourable

circumstances. Altogether we were not pleased with our visit to this town, and it is the only one in England we left without regret. The fault may have lain with us, and not with the place and its belongings. Another time we might see things in a different light. However that may be, we left in a discontented frame of mind, and as we left we shook the dust from off our feet, or, at least, the horses did so for us. But our displeasure was of short duration. A mile or so out on our road we came suddenly and unexpectedly upon a sight that made us forget all the past disagreeables. A fine Gothic wayside cross—hoary and old and grey, many-tinted and worn with years of exposure to all weathers, but still in a fair state of preservation – was before us. This, we discovered, is known by the name of the Queen's Cross. It was erected by Edward I., to mark one of the resting places of the body of his beloved Queen on her sad last journey, of which Charing Cross was the final one. It is a beautiful structure, chastely decorated, and forms a stately and touching memorial of a worthy woman.

We failed to find a half-way inn on our stage to-day; one was certainly mentioned in our road-book at Horton, but on our arriving at that spot we discovered that some years previously it had been converted into a farm-house. However, our loss was our gain, a camp out on the soft green made under the shelter of some spreading elms by the roadside, was not a bad exchange for the usual wayside inn-accommodation; and the horses enjoyed their corn none the less in the pure, free, open air, with a

dessert to follow of freshly gathered fragrant clover. Our rural picnics were pleasures and experiences not to be despised. The only shadow of sorrow that came across us, was the knowledge that we were nearing the end of our most enjoyable journey. Yes, in a day or two's time our joyous wanderings and our freedom would be over. We should once more be in busy, smoky London—and what a contrast to the simple, peaceful, healthy, rural gipsy-kind of an existence we had been leading for so many weeks past. We were quite spoilt for town life.

In the afternoon we arrived at Newport-Pagnell, our destination for the day. It proved to be a quiet, sleepy sort of a town, agreeably situated on the banks of the Ouse, over which are two handsome stone bridges, and surrounded by a pleasant pastoral country. However, the chief attraction of the town, to us, was the curiosity shops, of which there were two or three ; and we spent a considerable time in them, hunting for treasures and bargains. Strange to say, we did really find the latter amongst a quantity of rubbish, in one of them ; we noticed an old carved and gilt frame, containing three small panel pictures, exquisitely executed, and finished in oils, but somewhat damaged by rough treatment. We enquired the price somewhat anxiously—fearing, almost, lest it should be prohibitory, as some china and carved oak we had before priced had been, we thought, too highly valued ; but it appeared that the owner of the shop did not care for paintings, 'they were not in his line,' and asked us if we thought thirty shillings would be too much! That

amount of current coin of the realm quickly changed ownership, and the picture, or rather the pictures, were ours. They represent three interiors of the Alhambra in Spain, and are each signed by E. Rolando, Sevilla, whoever he may be. They are hanging in my drawing room now, and I would not take twenty times the amount I gave for them. In this shop also we saw two finely carved oak pilasters, evidently having belonged at one time to a fireplace. The shopman stated he had purchased them from an ancient manor-house near the town. What a pity it is such fine old places should be destroyed and pulled to bits by piecemeal thus ; they bore the date 1573. We longed to become the possessors of these, but, alas! the price demanded was such as to frighten us from even making an offer.

Amongst the many pleasures of a driving tour is the picking up here and there, and the hunting in likely places, for different knick-knacks, old china, clocks, carved oak, and whatever may take your fancy. Not only may you form an interesting and even a valuable collection in this way, but the pleasure of the search is great, and each object has, to me at any rate, as it were a special value and history. As I look round my smoke-room now in which I am writing, the different things I have collected at as many different places, recall many a pleasant day and curious out-of-the-way spots and places. Yonder in the corner is a quaint old brass bracket clock I got at a small shop at Winchester; over there is a fine old tankard I procured at another town ; at the top of the book-case is a beautiful and genuine old

fluted helmet—it was in a dreadful state of rust when I purchased it by the way, and what a job I had to clean it. Again, on the walls are some strange old brass plates; in another corner of the room is a delightful low old oak corner-cupboard, and so on. In nearly every room in the house I have some relic or treasure, gathered during my many wanderings North, South, East, and West through Old England.

On leaving Newport-Pagnell next morning we passed some very old almshouses with the following inscription, not readily to be understood on the first time of reading:—

> Al yov good Christians that here dooe pas
> By give soome thing to thes poore people
> That in S. Iohns Hospital doeth Ly.
> Ano 1615.

The top of the 6 is obliterated, and the date really reads 1015, but we concluded 1615 must have been the original one. We had a glorious drive through a very pleasant pastoral country on to Dunstable, though there was nothing on our way worthy of special remark, till we arrived at the charming, half-village, half-town of Woburn, with its picturesque church, clean, tidy, and well-built stone houses and cottages, and its long, low, comfortable-looking hotel. We had intended to have baited here; but the weather looked so threatening all round, we held a council of war, in which our man, who is weather-wise, took part, and we decided, as it was only some eight miles on to Dunstable, and the horses were fairly fresh, that it would be the wisest plan to press on, trusting to reach our night's quarters before we

were caught. It was perhaps a risky thing to do, and prudence would have called a halt here, but sometimes there is a virtue in boldness. Shortly after leaving the town we skirted the park of Woburn Abbey, the magnificent residence of the Duke of Bedford. The mansion contains many fine paintings by the old masters, and numerous portraits of notable people by famous artists. The park is surrounded by a wall twelve miles in circumference, and is well-wooded and stocked with deer. Our road now began to mount, and we had extensive views ahead and to the right and left of us ; but the prospect of the sky was not so pleasing, dark-looking lowering clouds were gathering around, and we had every prospect of arriving at our destination well drenched. It was provoking, too, the road turning out such a hilly one, as we could not make much speed with such heavy collarwork. Presently, however, the mounting ceased, and a long and gradual descent lay before us. Down this we travelled apace, the brake hard on, and the horses away from the pole, raising as we went a cloud of dust behind us. It was a race between us and the storm, with ten to one in favour of the weather. We dashed through the little village of Hockliffe at the bottom of the hill at a fine pace, sounding the horn as we turned the corner. Here we joined Telford's famous Parliamentary and mail-coach road, which we had last traversed at Bettws-y-Coed, and is one of the most perfect specimens of roadmaking in the world. It was made at the expense of the country, and leads from London to Holyhead. Had railways only been

invented a few years later, most of our main roads would, like this one, have been reconstructed and improved. The plans were prepared, and estimates voted for alterations to the Great North Road and others, but the successful opening of the railway between Manchester and Liverpool put a sudden stop to the work, which was a pity. Although this was the old mail road to the North, and in olden times busy and gay enough with traffic, it is lonely and almost deserted now. We met or passed no one on our way, and we could not but wonder if those who travelled over it, say eighty years ago, before railways were dreamt of, were to wake to life again and be shown the mail roads of Great Britain in their silent desolation, what they would think or say? What conclusions would they draw? Surely they would imagine that the decline and fall of Old England had already taken place. But to convey such to the crowded railway termini of our huge cities, what would they say then?

As Dunstable came into sight, the rain which had so long threatened commenced to come down in real earnest, and heavy enough to give us a good wetting before we reached the door of the Sugar-loaf Hotel in that town. Here the landlord, hearing our horn, which we blew for the purpose, at once came to the door to assist, and received us with a pleasant smile which made us feel at once welcome and more like a guest arriving than a traveller seeking shelter. And we were soon made exceedingly comfortable beneath the sign of the Sugar-loaf (a curious name for an hotel). The landlady saw

personally to our wants and asked us into her own sitting-room, where there was a glorious fire, which she insisted—good old soul!—on giving up to us that night. Soon a spread tea was placed before us by a pleasant, smiling waitress, all of which was enough to make a tired traveller more than contented. And in the evening, over a pipe and a glass of toddy, I had a long chat with the worthy landlord about things in general, and farming and farmers in particular; as upon those points his information was instructive and interesting. Much as I admire the British farmer—and I do admire him not a little—I must confess, in spite of the acknowledged hard times he has had to contend with lately, he is an inveterate grumbler. It is his one fault—and is it not the especial privilege of an Englishman to grumble? Bad weather and seasons he, of course, naturally complains bitterly of; but when, as I have known, he has had plenty of sunshine and excellent crops, he has complained he was no better off than before, because he reasons everyone else has good crops too, consequently prices are down. Surely, the English farmer is kin brother to the Scotch one, who had, in spite of the bad times, determined like an honest man to pay his rent to his last shilling. Said he to the steward when he was paying: 'It is my last shilling,' throwing down a roll of notes on the table. The steward counted them, and said, 'Why, there is fifty pounds too much.' 'Odd's man,' said the farmer, 'I've put my hand in the wrong pooch.'

It rained all that night, and it rained all the next morning, as though it had never rained before

in England, and was endeavouring to make up for lost time. By two o'clock in the afternoon it cleared up a little, however, and we determined to venture upon a start. Deceitful weather! It only held on long enough for us to get the horses to and entice us out of our comfortable quarters, when down came the rain again. We felt almost inclined to show the white feather. How it did pour! I never remember anything like it. The water ran off from our aprons in ceaseless falls on either side of the phaeton ; it dashed on the road and horses with such force as to rebound again. What a drive we had on to St. Albans, to be sure! We knew about as much of the country through which we passed as though we had been travelling through Moonland or Central China. It appeared more like driving through a sea than anything else. Wet, cold, and miserable after our long damp stage, we drove up to the Peahen, at St. Albans, and alighting ordered a private sitting-room, and a fire, and some hot tea, as soon as possible. What was our dismay to be told, in reply to our request, that the house was full, and we could not anyhow be accommodated. This was the last straw certainly. However, we insisted upon seeing the landlady, and explaining to her our plight, and working, if possible, on her sympathies, to see if something could not be done. She said she was very sorry, but her son was coming of age to-morrow, and they were giving a ball that night, and all her rooms were engaged for her guests ; and even if she could find us accommodation, we should never sleep for the noise. But she promised somehow to get us

a sitting-room and a fire, and tea for the time being —'and a bed also,' I added, smiling my best; 'you must do that.' The smile was effectual; I knew by her looks when she left (good old soul!) that were it possible she would put us up somehow—and she did. Truly, we slept not at all that night, for the dancers and the music most effectively drove slumber from our eyes; but if we slept not we rested, and that was something. Somehow outside our door, by some strange fatality, the 'spooney' couples came,—however, I must not repeat anything we heard, it is quite sacred with us—and besides, it would not be fair or right, and would be but a poor return for the hospitality shown to us under difficulties.

In the morning we found Phœbus overhead all smiles, though the roads underfoot were wet and muddy. We could hardly believe such a pleasant, bright-looking sky could have been so dark and disagreeable as it had been the day before. We strolled out and inspected the fine old abbey, now being restored. It is a grand old pile, and was originally founded by Offa, king of the Mercians, in honour of St. Alban, whose shrine is the principal feature of interest in the building. Close to it is a finely carved screen, from which the monks night and day kept watch and ward over his relics and the treasures by which they were surrounded. One peculiarity about the abbey is its great length compared with the height of the nave, being out of all proportion to the same; and this is the more singular as the old builders were certainly masters of proportion. Outside, the old religious edifice has an

impressive appearance; towering grandly over the town, as it has stood for centuries, a grand memorial of the past.

> Still points the tower and pleads the bell,
> The solemn arches breathe in stone,
> Window and wall have lips to tell
> The mighty faith of days unknown.

From St. Albans to Barnet was a pleasant road, and the air was fresh and cool after the rain of the previous day; we passed Finchley in due course, between which place and North-End we had a fine view of an expansive tract of country, with Harrow-on-the-Hill plainly visible, standing out like an island in a sea of green. On our way we exchanged salutations with the 'Old Times' coach, journeying northwards to the Abbey-town. And now we were soon amongst the traffic and busy streets of London, and in the evening found ourselves once more by 'our ain fireside,' discussing the many sights, pleasures and adventures of our three months' drive.

And now, kind reader, I regret that you and I must part. I thank you for your goodly company so long on our pleasant journey. We have traversed together many miles of beautiful and historic country —through fertile meadows and rough mountain lands our course has laid. We have visited together stern old castles, ancient manors, ruined abbeys, around all of which cluster inexhaustible legends of the golden antique times. Their picturesque ivy-clad walls, and misty shadowy chambers and passages, are suggestive of romance, story and song. We have travelled together through such a wealth of

rich, mellow, homelike scenery as England alone can show: through umbrageous woods; past stately hal and moated grange; by many a rural farm with the look of plenty and comfort; by lowly peaceful cottages; by solemn grey old country churches, within which the brave dead of old sleep so quietly; past silvery streams and winding rivers; by placid lake and lonely tarn; through mountain glens and over heathery hills and breezy moors our way has led us. And who shall say we have not had a pleasant journey, or that we have lost by renouncing the allurements of foreign in favour of home travel? We have more than once caught glimpses of the restless ocean that girds our happy land and ceaselessly day and night beats upon its favoured shore. All the while we have been wandering we have had the consciousness of travelling on our own, our native soil. It is surely not a fault, even in these degenerate days, to love and care for the land of our birth? Our mighty forefathers fought and bled for her on many a hard-contested field, in strange far-off lands, and upon the ocean waves: for Old England they spilt their best blood. Shall we not love her now, as dearly as they did of old, and treasure the mighty heritage they have left to us?

Our Birth-land this! around her shores roll ocean's sounding waves;
Within her breast our fathers sleep in old heroic graves;
Our Heritage! with all her fame, her honour, heart, and pow'rs
God's gift to us—we love her well—she shall be ever ours.

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